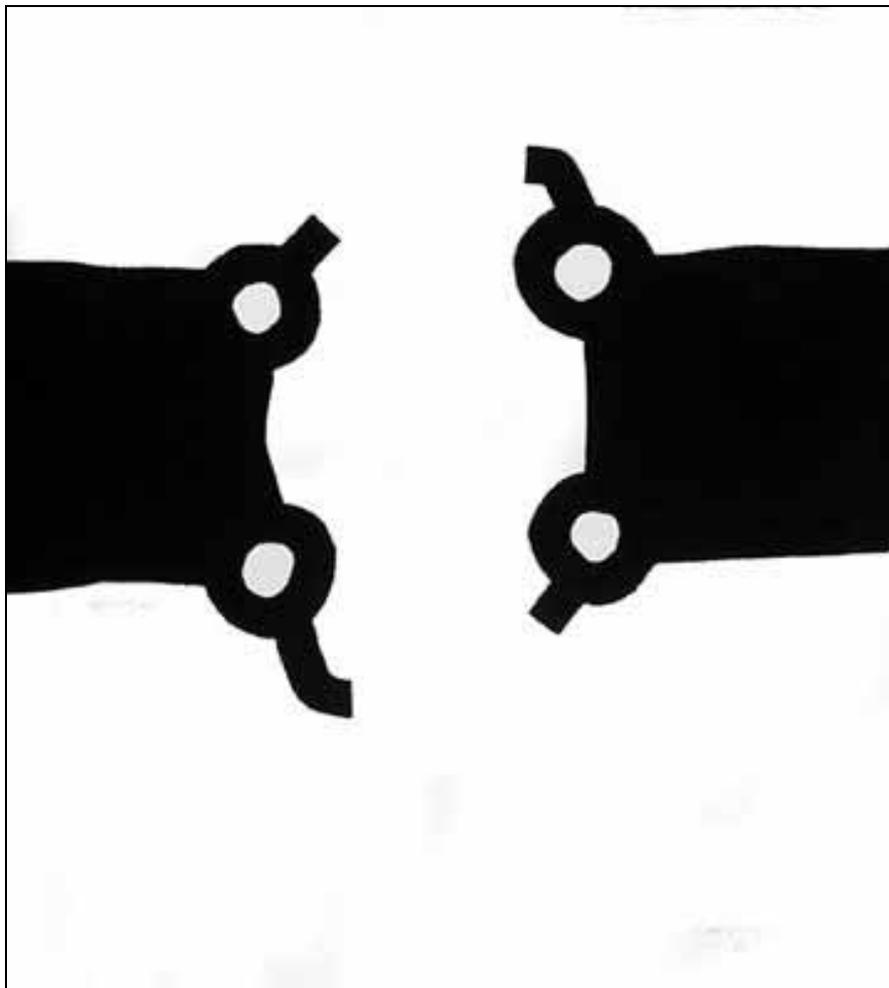


# Sorbian, Scottish Gaelic and Romansh: the Viability of Three Indigenous European Minority Languages.

Lizentiatsarbeit, eingereicht bei der Philosophischen Fakultät Freiburg (CH)



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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BFS	Bundesamt für Statistik
CnaG	Comunn na Gàidhlig
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GME	Gaelic-Medium Education
ICSP	Information Centre of the Scottish Parliament
NZZ	Neue Zürcher Zeitung
PAS	Paritätische Arbeitsgruppe Sprachengesetz Bund und Kantone
PSR	Pro Svizra Rumantscha
RLS	Reversing Language Shift
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands
SEP	Scottish Executive Publications
UHI	University of the Highlands and Islands
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

## **INTRODUCTION**

Sorbian, Scottish Gaelic and Romansh<sup>1</sup> are three of the lesser used European languages, with each having around 60,000 speakers. They are indigenous languages and have been spoken in their respective regions before the founding of the present nation-states. Over the last two centuries, migration has caused the Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh language areas to shrink. Today, they are smaller than ever before, so much so that most German, British and Swiss people have hardly ever heard Sorbian, Gaelic or Romansh spoken. Many majority language speakers, therefore, seem to assume that Sorbian, Gaelic or Romansh are destined to die out. These three languages would not be the first European languages to die out in modern times. Cornish and Polabian are just two examples of indigenous European languages that have been lost in the last three hundred years. This begs the question whether it really matters if lesser used languages become extinct.

In a word, the answer to that question is yes. The importance of saving threatened languages can hardly be disputed. The reasons for protecting minority languages are manifold. First, languages are interesting in themselves. The death of a language always implies the loss of human intellectual achievement. Second, linguists agree that it is important to study as many different languages as possible to find out more about language faculty and the way the human brain works. Furthermore, languages contain our history. The vocabulary of a language "provides us with clues about the earlier states of mind of its speakers, and about the kinds of cultural contacts they had" (Crystal 2000: 34-35). Moreover, languages reflect and transmit culture. If a language dies, the culture to which it belonged will be threatened and may also die out. Thus, language loss is likely to lead to an increasing cultural uniformity. Without cultural diversity the world would not only be a far less interesting place but also, very possibly, a stagnant one, since we would all have very similar ideas and values (Trudgill 1991: 67-68).

This list of reasons for saving threatened languages could easily be expanded upon. However, it should be obvious that maintaining lesser used languages is useful in many ways. The purpose of this *mémoire* is to find out to what extent the current conditions of Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh are adequate for language maintenance. Are there major shortcomings in the current situations that may lead to language shift? What could be done to improve these

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<sup>1</sup> In this essay, the term 'Romansh' is used as a synonym to 'Swiss Romansh' and 'Rhaeto-Romance' as a generic term for Romansh, Friulian and Dolomitic Ladin. 'Gaelic' is used as the short form of 'Scottish Gaelic'.

situations? By comparing the current conditions of the three minority languages, advantages and weaknesses of the position of each language may be detected and conclusions about the effectiveness of language maintenance measures drawn. Furthermore, knowledge of maintenance measures for one language may be transferred to another, if economic, political and societal conditions of the language groups are broadly similar. It was assumed that this would be the case for Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh, since all are indigenous languages of democratic European countries. Nevertheless, each language group has a different history of repression and relative tolerance that has influenced its current situation.

In order to find out how ideal the current conditions of Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh are, a number of theories of language maintenance will be analysed in Chapter 1. These theories have been chosen because of the different approaches they take to the problem. Analysis will be aimed primarily at extracting the decisive factors that influence language maintenance. Furthermore, it will be evaluated what form these crucial factors should take in order to guarantee an ideal language maintenance situation. In Chapters 2-4 the current situation of Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh will be described according to the relevant factors of language maintenance. For a better understanding of the current situation, each description is preceded by an introduction to the minority language and its history. It is the aim of this paper to provide, as far as possible, an up-to-date description of the situation of each language. Naturally, some information may nevertheless be obsolete.

Finally, Chapter 5 contains an analysis of the actual conditions of Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh. It compares the language data of all three with what the theories suggest as ideal conditions for language maintenance. Advantages and disadvantages of each of the three languages in terms of maintenance will be discussed, as well as similarities and differences between the three language situations. Shortcomings will be identified and some suggestions on how to overcome them will be made. The discussion will conclude with a tentative assessment of the viability of each language.

## **1 LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND LANGUAGE SHIFT THEORIES**

Many different approaches dealing with language maintenance and shift can be found in the literature on minority languages. All weight the importance of the various factors influencing language maintenance differently. Their importance differs according to the situation in which a linguistic minority lives. The situations of linguistic minorities vary for instance significantly depending on whether the minority is immigrant or indigenous. Immigrant minorities usually experience a far greater pressure to assimilate than indigenous minorities. There is often a clear expectation that they relinquish their original language at some point in time. The situations of indigenous linguistic minorities may also vary considerably depending on the biodiversity, climate and topography of their regions, the amount of contact they have with the majority culture and the political and economic situation of their country.

Before discussing the theories of language maintenance and shift, it is important to agree on the definitions of the most frequently used terms. These are 'language shift', 'language death', 'language maintenance' and 'language revitalisation'. 'Language shift' is generally used for the process in which "a particular community gradually abandons its original native language and goes over to speaking another one instead" (Trudgill 1995: 175). Such a process usually continues over several generations. With immigrant communities it mostly occurs within three generations (Stoessel 2002: 94). In the case of indigenous linguistic minorities, language shift can go on for centuries.

The final stage of language shift is called 'language death'. This is when the last speaker of a language has died (Southerland & Katamba 1997: 562). Nettle and Romaine distinguish between two types of language death. In a), "top down death, the language retreats from official institutions and public domains like the courts, the church, and perhaps the worlds of commerce and politics first, so in the end it is restricted to use in the home and perhaps among friends" (Nettle/Romaine 2000: 91). In b), "death from the bottom up, a language has retreated from everyday use and survives primarily in ceremonial or more formal use, such as school" (Nettle/Romaine 2000: 92). As examples for type a) they give Breton and Scottish Gaelic and for type b) Sanskrit.

'Language maintenance' is generally defined as "the absence of language shift" (de Vries 1992: 214) or as the "antonym of language shift" (Clyne 1986: 486). A language maintenance situation is a contact situation in which two languages co-exist in a fairly stable relationship and mother-tongue transmission of the less influential language is functioning (Southerland & Katamba 1997: 561).

Fishman uses the phrase 'reversing language shift' to refer to the opposite process of language shift. It always implies language planning, a process that can either begin with the reconstruction of a dead language or at a stage where there are still some native speakers. The term generally refers to a whole set of measures that will be looked at in the next subchapter. 'Language revitalisation' is often used as a synonym of 'reversing language shift', but always for a language which still has some native speakers (e.g. Crystal 2000: 130ff.; Clyne 1986: 487).

### **1.1 JOSHUA FISHMAN'S THEORY OF REVERSING LANGUAGE SHIFT**

Joshua Fishman believes that language shift occurs for three main reasons: physical or demographic dislocation, social dislocation and cultural dislocation. Under physical and demographic dislocation he subsumes on the one hand dislocations caused by natural disasters (such as floods, earthquakes, famines) and on the other dislocation caused by human intervention. These interventions can be mineral or forest depletion, soil exhaustion or industrialisation of agriculture and production. All of these human interventions bring foreigners (settlers, foreign occupants and immigrants), who do not speak the minority language, into the area. Intercultural neighbourhoods and marriages become increasingly common and occasions for speaking the language become increasingly rare. Apart from such direct contact with foreigners that move to the area, these human interventions often bring trade and mass media which also have a cultural and linguistic impact on the minority community.

Linguistic minorities are often socially and economically disadvantaged. As a consequence, the minority language may become associated with backwardness, both in the eyes of the majority and the minority. Thus, the minority population is faced with the dilemma of either being true to their cultural and linguistic roots and putting up with social disadvantages or of abandoning their traditions with the aim of improving their way of life. This disloyalty to the cultural roots of the talented and ambitious is what Fishman calls 'social

dislocation'. Cultural disloyalty means giving up the distinctive practices and traditions of one's culture, of which the minority language is a part. Fishman stresses that most democracies favour cultural disloyalty via their most central social, economic and political processes, i.e. the processes of democratisation and modernisation. These processes are dangerous for linguistic minorities as they bring with them increased contact with the majority culture, so much so that the latter can become omnipresent even in the minority community. However, Fishman stresses that one does not have to be against modernisation and democratisation when attempting to save lesser used languages. He believes that cultural disloyalty could be avoided by extending the concept of democratisation to the culture as well. In such a 'cultural democracy' the cultural and linguistic rights of minorities would be protected and cultivated (Fishman 1991: 63-64).

Fishman gives not only reasons for language shift, but also provides the reader with a very useful tool for saving threatened languages: his stages of reversing language shift. They should be read as a scale, so that stage 8 is the lowest step in the language maintenance process. 'Xish' is used as an abbreviation for the minority language and 'Yish' for the dominant language. 'RLS' is short for reversing language shift (Fishman 1991: 395):

STAGES OF REVERSING LANGUAGE SHIFT:  
SEVERITY OF INTERGENERATIONAL DISLOCATION  
(read from the bottom up)

1. Education, work sphere, mass media and governmental operations at higher and nationwide levels.
2. Local/regional mass media and governmental services.
3. The local/regional (i.e. non-neighbourhood) work sphere, both among Xmen and among Ymen.
- 4b. Public schools for Xish children, offering some instruction via Xish, but substantially under Yish curricular and staffing control.
- 4a. Schools in lieu of compulsory education and substantially under Xish curricular and staffing control.

II. *RLS to transcend diglossia, subsequent to its attainment*

5. Schools for literacy acquisition, for the old and for the young, and not in lieu of compulsory education.
6. The intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood-community: the basis of mother-tongue transmission.
7. Cultural interaction in Xish primarily involving the community-based older generation.
8. Reconstructing Xish and adult acquisition of XSL.

I. *RLS to attain diglossia (assuming prior ideological clarification)*

These stages are meant to be used for two things: first, for assessing the situation of a threatened language and defining its actual position on the scale. Second, they should be used for deciding which stage on the scale could reasonably be achieved. While planning the process of reversing language shift one may decide to skip over a stage that is not considered a desired functional sphere for Xish, as long as the priority stage is always kept in mind.

Fishman divided his scale into two parts. Stages 8 to 5, the lower stages, constitute what he calls the 'program minimum' of RLS. This 'program minimum' focuses on two aspects: achieving mother-tongue transmission of the minority language and a diglossic situation in which Xish is used at home and in the community and Yish in all the other situations. These core stages have the advantage of being attainable without a great amount of money and without having to depend on the majority group. However, as Fishman stresses, it is obviously harder to attain Stage 6, the stage of mother-tongue transmission, than to establish Xish schools and media. This is because Stage 6 depends almost entirely on the commitment of the community (Fishman 1991: 400-408).

Stage 6 is not only the most difficult stage to achieve but also the most important one, to which all other RLS efforts have to be linked. It may be reached through 'collective action', i.e. through the establishment of voluntary organisations, such as RLS nurseries, RLS recreational centres, or RLS homework/tutoring groups. Fishman insists on always asking how an RLS effort would reinforce the intergenerational link prior to its implementation. Previous stages (adult acquisition of Xish and organising cultural events in Xish) are useless for reversing language shift if they are not followed by Stage 6. Fishman further warns against trying to establish Stages 4 to 1 before mother-tongue transmission is truly functioning, as this would be ineffective or even dangerous for the entire RLS enterprise (1991: 393-400).

Fishman positions Stage 4, the school stage, relatively late on the RLS scale as he believes that the importance of education is often overestimated in language maintenance efforts. He points out that languages may indeed be learnt at schools, but that they do not accomplish RLS unless they are linked to language use outside school. He suggests that schools dedicated to Xish should involve parents, teachers and students in creating the community through which intergenerational mother-tongue transmission takes place (2001: 471-481).

As to Stages 3 to 1, Fishman mentions that it is not necessary to reach these stages for effectively reversing language shift, although the minority community would undoubtedly benefit from higher level linkages, such as mass media and governmental services in Xish. He believes that these stages are especially useful for adults – for their language use and identity building – and only indirectly link to mother tongue acquisition. For all communities whose language does not reach these higher stages he offers consolation by asking us how many languages of atomic physics there are today (Fishman 1991: 475).

Fishman's theory of reversing language shift has the advantage of not only telling us which measures should be taken, but of also grading the measures according to their importance. Generally speaking, every reversing language shift effort has to begin at the centre of the community – within the family and the community – before reaching out to other domains, such as education, the work sphere and the media. However, the RLS theory does not give us simply *one* recipe that is applicable to all threatened languages. Rather, it stresses the fact that the right measure depends on the stage of shift of the threatened language. The RLS theory can thus directly be applied to any language shift situation.

## **1.2 DAVID CRYSTAL'S THEORY OF LANGUAGE REVITALISATION**

According to David Crystal, the process of language decline happens in three stages. First, the minority becomes exposed to immense pressure, whether political, social or economic, to speak the dominant language. It may be either "top down", that is "in the form of incentives, recommendations or laws introduced by a government or national bodies" (Crystal 2000: 78); or "bottom up" in the form of peer group pressure or fashionable trends. The result of this pressure (stage two) is a period of emerging bilingualism, in which the minority people become increasingly proficient in the dominant language. During the third and last stage, this bilingualism starts to decline as the younger generation increasingly identifies with the new language and may often be ashamed to use the old language outside their homes (Crystal 2000: 78-79).

Crystal insists that chances for success are best if efforts to maintain an endangered language are focused on Stage 2, as it would be impossible nowadays to influence the factors which underlie the first stage in this process. Trying to influence the third stage would be too late for most languages. However, in the bilingualism of Stage 2 he sees an option for

peaceful co-existence and a state in which both languages are seen as complementary (Crystal 2000: 79).

Crystal establishes several 'top priorities' for saving endangered languages. First, he believes that public relations' activities in favour of language diversity are necessary as is developing in people a sense of the value of a language. Second, the gathering of information on endangered languages is important when pinpointing the most urgent cases. Data on the number of speakers, their age and fluency as well as the attitudes of the minority and the majority groups are crucial for assessing linguistic vitality and the possibility of revitalisation. Third, a theoretical framework is needed to identify similarities and differences between the situations of endangered groups. His fourth priority is fund raising to finance a grammar and a dictionary of the endangered language. Furthermore, Crystal mentions physical well-being, without which people have other more pressing concerns than language maintenance. Last but not least, language activists should foster positive community attitudes, as positive self-esteem of the speech community is crucial for any language revitalisation efforts (Crystal 2000: 92-112).

In order to find prerequisites for the process of language revitalisation, David Crystal evaluated several rather successful language maintenance projects. He came across six factors which appeared so frequently that they can be recognised as postulates of a theory of language revitalisation aimed at making an endangered language "a tool for inter-generational communication" in the home and neighbourhood (Crystal 2000: 130):

"1. An endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their prestige within the dominant community."

To increase prestige, the minority has to become visible. Therefore, it should obtain access to the media, and in the long-term to more sectors of the public domain. The media, however, will only report about a minority if there is significant community activity, so that enhancing this activity needs to be the first step (Crystal 2000: 130-131).

"2. An endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their wealth relative to the dominant community."

Money is needed to raise the profile of a language, but prosperity also helps to raise the self-esteem of a community and thus encourages people to use their language in public (Crystal 2000: 132). However, not all economic development helps to maintain threatened languages. Crystal believes that the service industry and especially tourism has an overall positive effect,

but warns about the harmful effect of the primary industries, such as mining and quarrying, as they often imply exploitation by outside organisations.

"3. An endangered language will progress if its speakers increase their legitimate power in the eyes of the dominant community."

Crystal believes that there is growing sympathy in many parts of the world towards cultural and linguistic minorities. As signs of this trend he mentions the coming into force of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages in 1998 and the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights drawn up in 1996. However, many countries continue to ignore language rights. Therefore, the need to maintain pressure on governments is as critical as ever (Crystal 2000: 133-135).

"4. An endangered language will progress if its speakers have a strong presence in the educational system."

Learning about the history, folklore and literature of a language in school can undoubtedly increase pupils' self-confidence. However, Crystal too warns against transferring all the responsibility to the schools. He would like to interpret 'educational system' in its broadest sense, and hence includes adult education courses and activity that comes under the heading of 'awareness-raising' (Crystal 2000: 136-137).

"5. An endangered language will progress if its speakers can write their language down."

A writing system is not only desirable for education, but generally for the maintenance of a language. Literacy cannot be substituted by audio and video recordings as the writing down of a language involves an analysis of the language, in particular how the sound system functions (Crystal 2000: 138-139).

"6. An endangered language will progress if its speakers can make use of electronic technology."

If a writing system for an endangered language exists, the Internet offers a wide range of opportunities. It can help to raise the public profile of a language in a way that is less expensive than the traditional mass-media. The cost of a Web page is the same, whether it is written in a minority language or not. Furthermore, the Internet helps people to "maintain a linguistic identity with their relatives, friends, and colleagues, wherever they may be in the world" (Crystal 2000: 142).

Unlike Fishman's theory of reversing language shift, Crystal's theory of language revitalisation cannot be read as a series of measures. Though he mentions top priorities without which no language revitalisation may be possible, he does not grade them or the six

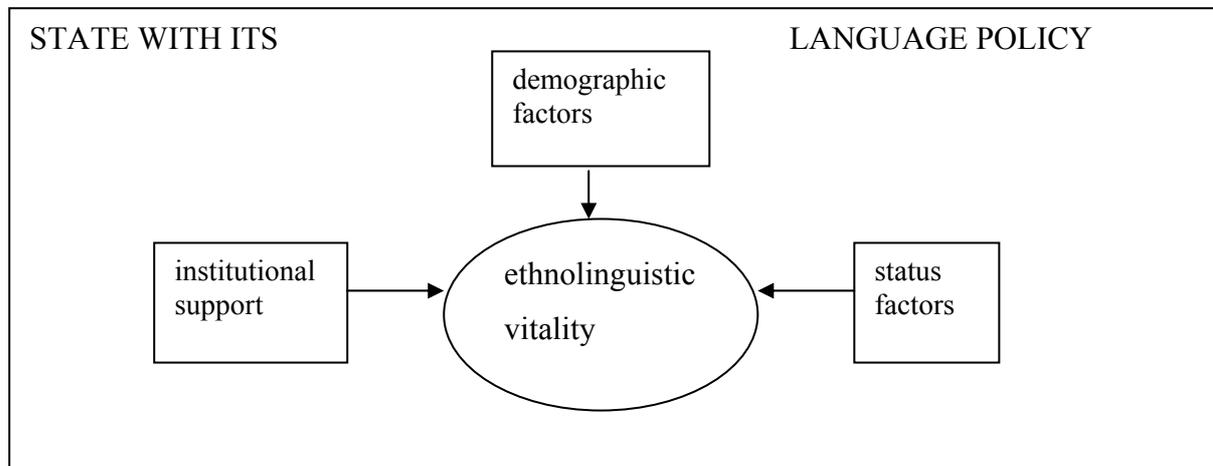
postulates, since he sees language revitalisation as a battle, in which "we need to be active on several fronts at once" (Crystal 2000: 101). This is a good tactic if enough money is available; if not, Fishman's scale is certainly more useful as an intervention programme. Crystal's theory further differs from Fishman's because he never stresses the importance of mother-tongue transmission. However, as the goal of the revitalisation process he mentions "intergenerational communication in the home and neighbourhood" which normally results in mother-tongue transmission (Crystal 2000: 130). It is not always clear how quickly the proposed measures will help to establish this goal, especially the suggested use of electronic technology. An advantage of Crystal's theory is that he gives concrete recommendations. But – as he says – "only a community can save an endangered language" (2000: 154). Thus, if a community lacks commitment, the suggested measures may prove useless.

### **1.3 RICHARD BOURHIS' INTERACTIVE ACCULTURATION MODEL**

Bourhis explains the mechanisms of language maintenance and shift with the aid of his 'Interactive Acculturation Model'. At the heart of this model lies the concept of ethnolinguistic vitality. By this he means "the vitality [...] that makes a group likely to act as a distinctive and collective entity" (Bourhis 2001: 16). The more ethnolinguistic vitality a group has, the more likely it is to maintain its language and to survive as a community (Bourhis 2001: 16).

Three types of structural variables influence the ethnolinguistic vitality of a group: a) 'demographic variables', b) 'institutional support' and c) 'group status variables'. Under demographic variables he subsumes the number of individuals, their distribution throughout a particular area, their birth rate, endogamy/exogamy and their patterns of immigration and emigration. 'Institutional support' "refers to the extent to which an ethnolinguistic group has gained informal and formal representation in the various institutions of a community, region or state" (Bourhis 2001: 17). A group that has organised itself as a pressure group can provide informal institutional support, whereas group members who have gained positions of control and power in industry, mass media, or the government can provide formal institutional support. Finally, 'the group status' variables refer to the social prestige of a language community both within its own territory and internationally. The combination of demographic, institutional and status factors affect the overall vitality of an ethnolinguistic group (Bourhis 2001: 17).

These factors do not exist in a vacuum, but are embedded in a state with its specific language policy, so that a model of the influences on ethnolinguistic vitality might look like this:



Bourhis perceives language policies and the ideologies behind them as situated on a continuum, ranging from the very liberal 'pluralism ideology' at one pole to an 'ethnist ideology' which is hostile to all minorities at the opposite pole (Bourhis 2001: 10-15). The above model is however incomplete. Two further factors have an influence on language maintenance and shift: first, the 'subjective ethnolinguistic vitality', i.e. how the ethnolinguistic vitality is perceived by the minority and the majority. Second, the 'acculturation orientations' of individuals of both the minority and the majority can affect the outcome of a language contact situation. By acculturation Bourhis understands "an adaptation process on the part of linguistic and cultural minorities as well as on the part of the dominant language majority of the society in question" (Bourhis 2001: 6-18).

In his Interactive Acculturation Model, Bourhis distinguishes between five different acculturation orientations which can be held by both the minority and the majority group, so that a language contact situation can have twenty-five different relational outcomes. The different acculturation orientations are the following: 'integrationist', 'assimilationist', 'separatist', 'marginalisation (minority)' / 'exclusionist (majority)' and 'individualist'. While the 'integrationist' orientation is characterised by a desire to maintain key features of one's cultural identity and adopting aspects of the other culture including the language, the 'assimilationist' orientation leads to the abandoning of all aspects of one's cultural identity. The 'separatist' strategy is characterised by the will to maintain all features of one's identity while rejecting features of the other culture. Minorities with the 'marginalisation' orientation

reject both their own and the other culture; whereas an 'exclusionist' majority is not only intolerant of minority cultures but also refuses to allow minorities to adopt the dominant culture. Finally, the 'individualist' orientation defines people as individuals rather than as members of groups (Bourhis 2001: 22-26).

Unfortunately, Bourhis interprets only some of the twenty-five possible relational outcomes with respect to language maintenance and shift. Language maintenance would most likely be the outcome if the majority of both groups were to take an integrationist approach to acculturation. Language shift occurs if assimilation is the preferred orientation of both the dominant and the minority group. Language shift is also likely to occur if one of the groups has an integrationist orientation and the other an assimilationist orientation. Furthermore, Bourhis predicts that minorities who have a low ethnolinguistic vitality are likely to suffer language shift if the dominant group has an exclusionist orientation, whereas minorities with a high vitality and a separatist orientation may resist the pressure (Bourhis 2001: 30-32).

Bourhis' theory of acculturation and language shift reveals the complexity of language maintenance issues. Factors at the macro-level (language policies, demographic, institutional and status factors), at the group level (ethnolinguistic vitality) and at the individual level (acculturation orientations) all have their part in determining the current situation of a language. Unlike Fishman's and Crystal's theories, Bourhis' Interactive Acculturation Model cannot be used as a guideline for language maintenance projects. It may, however, provide valuable indications of where a language is heading, as the effect of acculturation orientations are only felt over time. A disadvantage of this theory is its complexity. In order to apply it for such diagnostic purposes, many different factors need to be evaluated.

#### **1.4 CHRISTINA BRATT-PAULSTON: ISOLATION AS KEY FACTOR IN LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE**

Christina Bratt-Paulston has a very different perspective on language maintenance and shift. She identifies three major reasons for language maintenance:

- a) 'Self-imposed boundary maintenance' that always occurs for reasons other than language, most frequently religion. The Amish people and the orthodox Jewish Hassidim are examples. Self-imposed boundary maintenance is, however, rather unusual (Paulston 1994: 20).
- b) 'Externally imposed boundaries', "usually in the form of denied access to goods and services, especially jobs" (Paulston 1994: 21), but also in the form of geographic isolation. An example of the first form is the African American community of the past, whereas Gaelic in the Hebrides is an example of language maintenance for geographic reasons (Paulston 1994: 21).
- c) 'A diglossic-like situation', which means that two languages exist in a situation of functional distribution, each language having its specific domains in which it would be considered impossible to use the other language. The use of Guarani and Spanish in Paraguay is such an example (Paulston 1994: 21).

A fourth reason for language maintenance according to Paulston is the deliberate choice of language loyalty. Minority groups may see their language as a social resource or as a symbol in their fight for independence or whatever goal they are striving for. Paulston stresses that there is, however, "nothing inherently 'natural' about group language loyalty but rather that it is a deliberately chosen strategy for survival" (Paulston 1994: 22). Thus, language loyalty is often an important aspect of nationalism, that may have its own political status or the safeguarding of the social and cultural institutions of a group as its goal (Paulston 1994: 35).

In Paulston's discussion of the reasons for language shift, we find many factors that have already been discussed above, such as economic advantages from learning the majority language or the higher social prestige of the dominant language. Furthermore, she mentions different factors that facilitate access to the dominant language, such as access to mass media, to roads and transportation, travelling, trade, vast in-migration or continued migration, exogamy, compulsory military service, and primarily universal schooling (Paulston 1994: 17-20).

Paulston's theory of language maintenance is thus characterised by a strong emphasis on isolation, whether man-made or geographical. According to her theory, minority groups would be most likely to maintain their language if they had almost no contact with the majority culture and majority language speakers. Thus, it follows that minority members should be as immobile as possible, i.e. never leaving their community and working in their immediate neighbourhood. However, even then they might come into contact with majority members (in the form of tourists, state employees, etc). Paulston's reasons for language maintenance are certainly correct, but they do not seem to be useful as a guideline for any language maintenance project. Since today's world is characterised by ever growing globalisation and mobility, it seems impossible that any minority group would renounce this trend for the sake of saving its language.

### **1.5 NETTLE AND ROMAINE'S GLOBAL VIEW OF LANGUAGE SHIFT**

Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine see the question of language maintenance and shift from a very broad perspective. They believe that until about thousand years ago, there had been a linguistic equilibrium in the world, with the number of languages being lost equalling the new ones created. This equilibrium, however, has been lost for two main reasons: the development of agriculture and the industrial revolution. As these phenomena spread across the world, they put many languages at risk. Nettle and Romaine believe that agriculture "set off the development of economic differences between human communities on a scale which had not existed before" (Nettle/Romaine 2000: 98) and that it culminated in European farmers overcoming Australian hunters and gatherers. The industrial revolution has created further inequalities between communities, especially in the field of technology, and has thus intensified language shift pressures (Nettle/Romaine 2000: 98).

Many of the factors Nettle and Romaine stress as important for language maintenance have already been mentioned. Like Fishman, they believe that language use at home must be secured first, before any effort to promote the language in other domains is undertaken. They too stress the importance of the community and of conferring power on the minority people, as official support is usually no guarantee for language maintenance. They believe that 'top-down strategies' such as official support in the form of language policies, for example, can only be helpful in addition to voluntary efforts in the community, the so-called 'bottom-up strategies' (Nettle/Romaine 2000: 39-200).

## 1.6 SYNTHESIS OF THE THEORIES DISCUSSED

The aim of this section is to analyse recurring elements in the above theories, as they are considered to exert an influence on language maintenance. It will include an examination of the ideal design of these decisive factors in reversing language shift. The following seven factors have been identified: 'globalisation and mobility', 'demographic factors', 'the speech community and its commitment to the language', 'the official status of a minority's language and culture', 'education', 'media' and 'language attitudes'. Please note that this is only a selection, and does not claim to be exhaustive. Furthermore, one should not forget that these factors are interconnected and may even overlap. For instance, the problem of emigration from the traditional linguistic area naturally influences the 'demography' factor, but it may also influence that of 'language attitudes', as a language may become associated with backwardness in the course of an emigration process.

### 1.6.1 GLOBALISATION AND MOBILITY

First of all, we shall discuss an influence that is generally considered to be negative for lesser used languages. Globalisation is believed to be detrimental as it is connected with increasing mobility and thus with greater access to the dominant culture. By means of an analysis of the impact of globalisation on minority languages, Paulston illustrates this in her discussion on the importance of isolation and the factors that facilitate access to the dominant language (such as access to mass-media, roads and transportation). Fishman even sees in globalisation the motor of language shift and *the* reason why it is so hard to maintain an endangered language. He believes it to be the strongest process the world knows today (Fishman 2001: 6).

As globalisation is such a powerful process, there seems to be no way of eliminating its influence on minority languages. This may also be the reason why several researchers have tried to pinpoint its advantages. Fishman, for instance, believes that globalisation with its spreading of mass culture can lead to a hunger for traditions and ethno-cultural roots. This could be a niche for small languages, as they promise "greater self-regulation of one's home, family, neighbourhood and community, on the one hand, and of one's own history and culture, on the other hand" (Fishman 2001: 459). He also points out that when viewed in a global perspective, a so-called 'majority' is just another minority, especially if it is recognised by an international community. In this way globalisation can make majorities aware of minority

issues and the international community can act as a controlling mechanism: if a majority seeks recognition it has to do justice to the minorities in its country (Fishman 2001: 459-460).

A unified Europe is also believed to strengthen lesser used languages, especially as it adheres to the principle of subsidiarity in language-related issues. The European Community also propagates trilingualism as an educational aim (Rindler Schjerve 2002: 23-30). Information technology is also seen as an advantage of globalisation. Thanks to this new technology small languages and their status would be far less determined by the policies of individual states (Haarmann 2002: 33-34). However, Fishman is certainly right in warning against any overestimation of the positive effects of globalisation and of its modern communication technologies. A virtual community does not contribute to mother-tongue transmission and will thus never be as good as a real community (Fishman 2001: 458).

#### 1.6.2 DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS

Demographic factors are present in almost all of the theories discussed earlier. It is generally agreed that the number of speakers is an immediate indicator of safety (e.g. Crystal 2000: 14, Paulston 1994: 19). However, the critical mass of a minority group, i.e. the number that suggests safety cannot easily be determined. Nettle and Romaine roughly place the critical mass at 100,000, but point out that in some parts of the world, for example in Vanuatu, much smaller languages seem to be maintained (Nettle/Romaine 2000: 9). David Crystal is certainly right in stressing that speaker figures given out of context are useless. He insists that they should always be viewed in relation to their respective community. A number of 500 can suggest relative safety in an isolated rural setting. However, if the same 500 speakers are dispersed over a large city, the speakers will barely be able to maintain their language (Crystal 2000: 11-12). Thus, the distribution of speakers in a particular area should always be taken into account when analysing the situation of a language.

Very useful data are figures of language use at home, as it determines the language of the next generation. Exogamy data is believed to be the most positive indicator of incipient shift (Paulston 1994: 18). Age-related language use data are also important as it shows the extent of mother tongue transmission. A sensitive index of where a language is going is data on language use by teenagers and young adults, since peer group pressure and the demands of the job market often result in language loss (Crystal 2000: 18). Ideally, the demographic data of a language community therefore shows an equally high language proficiency – in

understanding, speaking, reading and writing – for all age groups. Geographical isolation and a high density of speakers are further advantages.

#### 1.6.3 THE SPEECH COMMUNITY AND ITS COMMITMENT TO THE LANGUAGE

Evidently the best thing to maintain a language is to use it. The daily use of one's mother tongue is, however, only possible if one is surrounded by an active speech-community. Furthermore, the speech community is important for language transmission, as it takes place in the nucleus of every speech community – the family. Having a well functioning home-family-neighbourhood-community is therefore the crucial stage to be attained in any effort to reverse language shift. In an active speech community, cultural activities are organized and initiatives generated with the aim of maintaining the minority's language and culture. Nettle and Romaine even find it important that language maintenance efforts are financed in the early stages by the community itself since "dependence on state resources undermines the minority's responsibility and right to control its own affairs" (Nettle/Romaine 2000: 189). Ideally, a speech community should be highly localised and have only a limited amount of exogamy. Furthermore, minority groups should decide on what can best be done for their language and should have the will and the energy to realise their projects.

#### 1.6.4 THE OFFICIAL STATUS OF A MINORITY'S LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The official status of a linguistic minority as well as its legal and financial situation are generally considered as less important for language maintenance than other factors, such as 'community commitment'. Cultural and linguistic rights may nevertheless positively influence language maintenance. For instance, a minority group's self-esteem may be raised if its culture becomes valued and protected. Furthermore, the eroding of cultural differences through modernisation and democratisation may be lessened if the cultural and linguistic rights of minorities are protected and cultivated (Fishman 1991: 64). It is therefore justified to demand a sound legal status for minority languages at both the national and the international level. The financial situation of a community is also important. Crystal believes that at least £360 mn is needed to cover three years of work (by one linguist) dedicated to each of the 3,000 most endangered languages (Crystal 2000: 95). Clearly fund raising is essential for any language maintenance project.

The importance of official support in the form of linguistic rights and funding is still subject to debate. Nettle and Romaine warn against overestimating official support by pointing out the cases of the Hawaiian and Irish languages. Both have been official languages for a long time, but are still in a precarious position. The reason for this lies in a lack of voluntary efforts and ideological commitment (2000: 39, 188). Paulston even suggests that tough conditions for a minority might sometimes be better than official support, as they can provoke stubbornness and resistance in the community: "In hard times, man will cling to his language and ethnic group; in times of plenty, man pays little attention to resources like ethnic languages" (Paulston 1994: 24). This explanation might indeed have a grain of truth, but cannot, of course, be the solution for saving endangered languages. It seems very doubtful that such resistance can be upheld for a long time, say over several generations. Furthermore, if a language has official status, its speakers receive administrative forms and official documents – in short all their correspondence with the authorities – in their mother tongue. Contrary to newspapers and books, official letters and forms must be read. Their importance for language maintenance therefore should not be overlooked. In an ideal language maintenance situation, minorities are protected by linguistic and cultural rights, but should have the rights and the power to decide upon their own language maintenance projects.

#### 1.6.5 EDUCATION

Education in the mother tongue can be an important factor in language maintenance efforts, especially if education is interpreted in its broadest sense. An ideal education system should include extra-curricular activities such as language playgroups, summer immersion camps, or community based programmes involving older members of the community. Language courses should be closely linked to the community and its opportunities for active communication. The school has an important role to play in providing pupils with a cultural identity and contributing to greater self-confidence by teaching them about the history and literature of their language (Fishman 2001: 470-471, Crystal 2000: 137).

Fishman and Crystal warn, however, against overestimating education and transferring too much responsibility to the school system (Fishman 2001: 470; Crystal 2000 136). According to Fishman, this is why the revitalisation of Irish has so far failed (Fishman 1991: 402). He stresses that language study for RLS purposes will be unsuccessful unless there is a community in which the language is actively used (Fishman 2001: 470-471). Where there is an active community, education in the mother tongue is of course desirable. The use of the

minority language in secondary and higher education may help the language to shrug off its image as a family language.

#### 1.6.6 MEDIA

Access to the media is useful for raising the profile of a minority. In this way, the prestige of a minority within the dominant community can be raised (Crystal 2000: 130). Without occasional programmes dealing with the minority group, many of the majority may not even be aware of the existence of a minority in their country. Sorbian author Jurij Bržan illustrated this point in an interview by stating that German Chancellor Schröder had never heard of the Sorbians until a political trip to Dresden. When asked how the German state could more effectively support the Sorbians, Bržan had just one wish: the political establishment should go out and tell the Germans about the Sorbians and their history (Wolf 2001: 49-50).

This sort of publicity should of course happen via the dominant language and in the majority's mass media. Media in the minority language is generally not considered a top priority for saving the language, especially because of the high costs involved. Crystal therefore suggests the Internet as a cheaper alternative and Fishman places the media in the last stages of his scale. He believes that local media in the minority language can be useful, especially in shaping adult identity and language use. However, its usefulness for implanting mother tongue use in the young is doubtful (Fishman 1991: 403-404). Yet, if other more urgent requirements (according to Fishman's scale) are fulfilled and money is available, the creation of a local radio station or newspaper will certainly have a positive effect on a speech community. Newspapers and radio stations are excellent media for introducing new vocabulary to a language. The use of media is part of our daily language use and if a speech community has no access to media in its own language then its language use is restricted. It also increases the prestige of a language in the eyes of its speakers, if they can hear their language daily on the radio or on TV.

### 1.6.7 LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

A recurring factor in theories of language maintenance and shift is the factor of language attitudes. This factor involves the amount of prestige and importance given to a minority language both by the minority and the majority group in relation to the majority language. Thus, one could also speak of the unofficial status of languages. In one form or other, this concept is present in almost all theories of language maintenance. In David Crystal's theory of language revitalisation, increasing the prestige of a minority language within the dominant community is the first of his six postulates for successful revitalisation efforts. In his view, language attitudes are linked to community commitment, as a community can only increase the prestige of its language if it can make its presence felt within the wider community (Crystal 2000: 130). In Bourhis' theory of acculturation and language shift, the concept of attitudes can be found in what he calls "subjective ethnolinguistic vitality", a term that includes attitudes and beliefs of both the minority and the majority group relative to the vitality of a community and its language (Bourhis 2001: 18). Paulston views a higher social prestige of the dominant language, together with expected economic advantages, as the major incentive for language shift. However, if the social prestige of the minority language is high, it is often deliberately maintained as a strong symbol of identity (Paulston 1994: 20-22).

Some linguists even see language attitudes as *the* decisive factor in language maintenance. David Bradley, for instance, writes in his essay "Language Attitudes: the Key Factor in Language Maintenance" that as long as minority people have a positive attitude towards their language no linguist is needed to save it (Bradley 2002: 9). He mentions two overall attitudes that are key to language maintenance. First, the attitude of the group towards its ethnolinguistic vitality; second whether the language is regarded as a key aspect of the identity of the group. Both Bourhis and Paulston stress these factors too. Furthermore, Bradley believes that "more specific minority and majority beliefs and preferences" are also highly relevant in language maintenance situations. Answers to the following five points are crucial:

- whether bilingualism is accepted and valued, or even normal and expected
- how public use of a minority language in the presence of monolingual majority speakers is viewed
- whether minority group members view their language as 'difficult' or 'hard to maintain'
- the attitudes of the majority, the minority itself, and other minorities about the relative utility, importance and beauty of the majority and various minority languages
- whether the society as a whole supports, tolerates or represses LM for minority languages (Bradley 2002: 1).

In addition to these points, it is also important what a minority group thinks of subvarieties. If it is willing and able to understand a range of subvarieties, substantial internal diversification may arise, especially in the absence of a standard variety. On the other hand, a minority which takes a more purist stance and may even have a standard dialect which all speakers are able to understand is in a clearly favourable position for language maintenance (Bradley 2002: 1-9).

Bradley's analysis of various beliefs and perceptions shows that the attitude factor encompasses a broad field – attitudes towards several linguistic and sociolinguistic factors can have a bearing on language maintenance. The beliefs of not only the minority group but also of the majority and other minorities are important. This multidimensional view can only be obtained over a long period of time and with a great amount of work. Ideally, the view of the majorities and minorities in relation to language diversity in their countries should be as positive as possible. Nevertheless, they should also believe in the advantages of standardising languages.

### **1.7 REMARKS ON THE DATA USED IN THIS MÉMOIRE**

This study relies heavily on data from earlier studies. Therefore, the question of 'what is reliable data' is crucial. It is generally agreed that surveys of language maintenance and shift require several identical measures on large samples of individuals (e.g. de Vries 1992: 217; Lieberman 1980: 12). Without repeated measures, it is impossible to study change over time. De Vries demands at least three measures over a long period of time. Two measures he regards as insufficient, as a difference between the two values obtained could either indicate real change or imperfect reliability. Furthermore, he sets out the criteria that a research design should ideally fulfil: measures should be taken in identical procedures, they should deal with different domains and be taken over a large sample. De Vries is also aware that these requirements are time-consuming and costly, and are therefore never met in practice (de Vries 1992: 217-220).

Our data is in this respect no exception. Ideally, the data would have been obtained using the same procedure for each language. Thus, the comparison of the three language situations would have had maximal validity. Our data, however, comes from various studies that used different research designs and questionnaires. Nevertheless, some questions are certainly comparable and some of de Vries' criteria, such as the time dimension, have been taken into account.

## **2 THE CURRENT SITUATION OF SORBIAN**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION: THE SORBIAN LANGUAGE AND ITS HISTORY**

Sorbian is a West Slavic language spoken in the Eastern German states of Brandenburg and Saxony, in a region called Lusatia. It is closely related to Czech, Polish and Slovakian. Sorbian is the last surviving Slavic idiom spoken in Eastern Germany. In the early medieval period most people living in the territory of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Saxony and Brandenburg spoke Slavic dialects. Apart from Sorbian, the Polabian idiom survived longest. It had died out by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Jenč 1993: 96-97).

The earliest Sorbian documents date back to the time of the Reformation and are written in various dialects. At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, two standardised written Sorbian languages emerged: Upper Sorbian, derived from the dialect of Bautzen in Upper Lusatia and Lower Sorbian, derived from the dialect of Cottbus, a town in Lower Lusatia. To date, texts have been written in one of these two varieties. Apart from the Napoleonic period, the Sorbian-speaking territory has always been divided into two parts – Upper Lusatia and Lower Lusatia, each subject to two different rulers – the Duke of Saxony and the King of Prussia respectively. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Sorbs continually strived towards a united, autonomous region of Lusatia or in either the state of Brandenburg or Saxony. However, their efforts did not meet with success. It is therefore not surprising that the two written varieties (Upper and Lower Sorbian) still exist, as the two Sorbian groups never had much contact with each other (Jenč 1993: 98-109). This administrative division of the Sorbian-speaking territory may have been one of the most inimical circumstances for the stability of the language (Glaser 2002).

The Sorbs became a minority in Lusatia in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, Prussia had become increasingly hostile towards its various ethnic minorities and in 1875 Prussia forbade all Sorbian teaching. Sorbian priests and teachers were sent to German communities, while their German counterparts were given posts in Sorbian parishes. Economic changes were likewise damaging to the maintenance of the language. Coal mining and the textile and glass industry expanded rapidly during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, causing many Sorbs to work in these predominantly German environments (Glaser 2002). It was only after World War I that the Sorbs were officially recognised as an ethnic and linguistic minority. The constitution of the Weimar Republic stated that minorities should not be impeded in their

cultural development and should be allowed to use their language in education. Despite these liberal regulations, Sorbian efforts to receive an autonomous status for Lusatia were answered with various forms of repression. In 1920, a government department, the Wendenabteilung, was established with the aim of controlling Sorbian activities and promoting assimilation. Teachers received a premium for spreading the German language in the bilingual territory (Kunze 1995: 57-59).

The Nazi regime initially tried to assimilate the Sorbs as completely as possible. It called them a German people that merely spoke another language and explained their traditions as deriving from German folklore. Sorbian names were Germanised and the Sorbian intelligentsia evicted from Lusatia. In 1937, the Sorbian umbrella organisation Domowina and all other Sorbian organisations were banned; Sorbian newspapers, libraries and publishing houses were liquidated. In 1940, the Sorbs were reclassified as Slavs and were to be dispersed across the Reich as a 'führerloses Arbeitsvolk'. Fortunately, the course of history pre-empted an evacuation of the Sorbs (Kunze 1995: 62-65.)

After 1945, the Sorbs came under indirect Slavic control, as Lusatia lay in the Soviet zone of occupation. This was at first advantageous to the Sorbian people. In 1948, Saxony introduced a 'law for the protection of the rights of the Sorbian population' which was extended to Brandenburg in 1950. It guaranteed Sorbian-medium education and the establishment of Sorbian cultural institutions. The Domowina as well as many other Sorbian organisations were re-founded. Although these laws were adopted also by the GDR in 1949, the Sorbian-speaking population continually decreased during the communist era. Anti-Sorbian sentiment was still common among the German population as well as the SED officials. The official policy of equal rights was only applied in a half-hearted manner. Most inimical for the maintenance of Sorbian, however, were the collectivisation of agriculture and the further industrialisation of Lusatia through large-scale coalmining projects. In these ethnically-mixed working environments, Sorbian speakers were usually a minority and thus no longer used their language at work (Pech 1999:221-242).

## **2.2 GLOBALISATION AND MOBILITY**

Increasing mobility over the last one hundred years has had a strong impact on the Sorbian community. Lusatia is not a geographically isolated area. Rising industrialisation and brown-coal production during the GDR era attracted many German and Polish-speaking labourers to the area. Between 1950 and 1965, the population of the towns in the coal-mining area grew by at least 40%. Wojerecy/Hoyerswerda, the nearest town to the brown-coal mining centre Schwarze Pumpe grew by as much as 600%. By 1993, 77 Sorbian villages had been completely destroyed and 47 villages partially destroyed as a result of coal mining. 22,296 people were forcibly removed from their homes during the GDR era alone (Pech 1999: 165-192). Already by the end of World War II, the Sorbs had greater exposure to the German language. Many German refugees from the former Eastern regions settled in traditional Sorbian areas. According to a survey conducted in 1946 by the Domowina, at least 20% of the population of Sorbian villages were German refugees. The latter usually lived for years within Sorbian families and, since they had been expelled from their homes by Slavs, often had negative feelings towards the Sorbs (Pech 1999: 27).

Since 1989, the immigration of Germans no longer undermines the stability of the Sorbian population but the emigration of the Sorbs themselves. As a result of switching from a communist economy to a free-market one, the unemployment rate in the region is currently at around 20%. Many young people are leaving the region to find a job in former West Germany. It is even feared that "the majority of children growing up in Lusatia today will probably be forced to accept training and jobs outside the region" (Glaser 2002).

### 2.3 DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS



Sorbian language area. (Source: Holzer, W. & Pröll, U. 1994: 356)

Sorbian is spoken in a region east of the town of Kamjenc/Kamenz, near the towns of Budyšin/Bautzen, Wojerecy/Hoyerswerda, Běla Woda/Weisswasser and Chošebuz/Cottbus. Bautzen and Cottbus are the cultural heartlands of the Upper and Lower Sorbian regions, each having a Sorbian medium high school, a Sorbian museum and other Sorbian institutions. The Sorbian, or bilingual area as it is usually called, is no longer a connected whole. Today, the area south of Cottbus is completely Germanised. It also has the greatest source of brown coal in Germany. Today, the bilingual area is about a tenth of the size of the Sorbian territory of the early medieval time. Many place names derived from Sorbian words bear witness to the long history of the Sorbs in Germany. 'Leipzig', for instance, is a derivation of the Sorbian word 'lipa', meaning lime-tree (Jenč 1993: 98-99).

Both Saxony and Brandenburg have officially defined the bilingual territory. The law of Saxony enumerates all municipalities and parts of municipalities in which the Sorbs may

exercise their rights. The percentage of Sorbian speakers in most of these municipalities is less than 10%. 80-85% of the five Catholic Upper Sorbian municipalities are Sorbian speakers. There, the language of communication at home, in the neighbourhood and in the community is still predominantly Sorbian (Rautz 2000). A 1987 survey by the Sorbian Institute evaluated the number of Sorbian speakers; a total of 2,200 people were interviewed. They lived in eleven villages near Bautzen, Kamenz, Weisswasser, Hoyerswerda and Cottbus, thus across the traditional Sorbian area. From 2,000 reliable answers, projections were made on the basis of the 1981 census results:

		Sorbian speakers
<b>Upper Sorbian</b> (including transitional dialects)	Catholic parishes	15,000
	Protestant parishes	28,200
<b>Lower Sorbian</b>		16,200
Towns in the bilingual area (Upper and Lower Sorbian), estimation		7,000
<b>Total</b>		66,400

(Norberg 1996a: 75)

These figures include both mother-tongue speakers and people with only limited knowledge of Sorbian. Sorbian speakers from the Catholic parishes can be assumed to be mother-tongue speakers. According to Ludwig Elle who was in charge of the survey, the estimated numbers of mother-tongue Lower Sorbian speakers are as follows:

Total Lower Sorbian speakers	16,200	
<b>Mother-tongue speakers</b>	<b>5,134</b>	
66 years and more	3,018	58.8%
56-65 years	1,602	31.2%
46-55 years	377	7.3%
36-45 years	78	1.5%
25-35 years	59	1.1%
0-25 years	0	0%

(Norberg 1996a: 75)

According to Elle's estimation, Lower Sorbian is thus no longer transmitted as a mother tongue in the family. Norberg's language-use survey conducted in the Lower Lusatian village of Drachhausen/Hochoza, confirmed this estimation. No parents could be found that transmitted Sorbian as a first or second language to their children. Norberg divided her 274 informants into three groups: the first generation (born between 1903 and 1936), the second generation (born between 1937 and 1956) and the third generation (born between 1957 and 1978). 85% of first generation informants reported Sorbian as their first language, while the

other 15% reported to be bilingual. Of the second generation, only 8% learnt Sorbian as their first language, and one informant reported having been raised bilingually; all the other informants indicated German as their first language. In the third generation, only two informants indicated Sorbian as their first language, the younger of the two being born in 1968. It was thus the first generation Sorbians, who raised their children between 1937 and 1956, that no longer transmitted Sorbian. In view of the immense pressure exerted by the Nazi regime to assimilate, these results are not surprising. In addition, the first generation did not receive any support from the school system. Contrary to Saxony where Sorbian was introduced in the education system directly after World War II, Sorbian teaching in Brandenburg was not introduced until 1952 (Norberg 1996b: 50-94).

Today, no up-to-date figures for Sorbian are available due to the lack of political interest in language use data (Sächsische Zeitung: 17.3.2003). According to legislation relative to Sorbians in force in both Saxony and Brandenburg, ethnic identity does not depend on linguistic competence. The only criterion for belonging to the Sorbian people is a self-declaration of one's Sorbian identity (Pastor 1997: 109). This means that anyone who wishes to have a Sorbian identity can do so. In the 1987 survey, only 45,000 identified themselves as Sorbian, although the number of Sorbian speakers was around 66,000 (Norberg 1994: 149).

Over the last one hundred years, the number of Sorbian speakers has significantly decreased in both Upper and Lower Lusatia. Against the backdrop of the long history of repression towards the Sorbs, this steady decrease comes as no surprise. The earliest figures available date from 1880 for Lower Sorbian and from 1884 for Upper Sorbian, and give the number of mother-tongue speakers. The census of 1925 also asked for mother-tongue speakers, whereas in 1956 all persons that were able to speak Sorbian were counted. People with only limited knowledge of Sorbian are not included in the 1956 figures. Those of 1987 include anyone with a knowledge of Sorbian:

	1880/84	1925	1956	1987
Upper Sorbian speakers including the transitional dialects	93,657	48,594	45,794	43,200
Lower Sorbian speakers	72,410	22,404	18,361	16,200
Towns in the bilingual area (Upper and Lower Lusatia, estimations)			8,575	7,000
<b>Total Sorbian speakers</b>	<b>166,067</b>	<b>70,998</b>	<b>72,730</b>	<b>66,400</b>

(Norberg 1996a: 72-75)

The figures presented above clearly show that the shift from Sorbian to German is a steadily ongoing process. Already between 1880/84 and 1925 (thus prior to the open terror of the Nazi regime), Sorbian lost more than half of its native speakers. Comparing the figures of 1880/84 to the figures of 1987, the situation of Upper Sorbian looks slightly better than that of Lower Sorbian. Within a hundred years, the number of Upper Sorbian speakers decreased by half, from 93,657 to 43,200. Lower Sorbian, however, only has a quarter of the speakers it had one hundred years ago - from 72,410 to 16,200. Taking into account that the figures of 1880/84 relate to mother-tongue speakers and that those of 1987 include anyone with a knowledge of Sorbian, the situation of the Sorbian language looks even bleaker. The number of Lower Sorbian mother-tongue speakers in 1880 (72,410) is 14 times greater than the estimated figure of 5,134 mother-tongue speakers in 1987. Furthermore, one should not forget that the number of German speakers in Lusatia increased over the same period. Today, the percentage of Sorbian speakers even in the bilingual area is rather low - approximately 12% in the bilingual territory of Saxony and 7% in that of Brandenburg. In the states of Saxony and Brandenburg themselves, the proportion of Sorbian speakers is so small - 0.9% and 0.8% respectively - that it would be easy to overlook them (estimations by Elle, 2002).

Considering that Sorbian speakers are dispersed over a rather large area and almost nowhere in a majority position, it is interesting to examine the language group's endogamy data, as a high percentage of endogamous marriages can serve as a basis for language maintenance. During the Sorbian language use survey that was conducted as part of the European Union's Euromosaic report, a representative sample of 296 individuals from across the bilingual area was interviewed. About half of the respondents had a partner who spoke little or no Sorbian. This would suggest that 50% of the Sorbian population are unlikely to transmit Sorbian to their children.

The Euromosaic survey further investigated the four language abilities: understanding, speaking, reading and writing.

Sorbian	German			
	Underst.	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Very good	62%	55%	58%	42%
Quite good	25%	28%	25%	34%
Little	8%	10%	9%	15%
None	5%	7%	8%	9%

(<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/sorab/an/el/el.html>)

Evidently, most respondents have greater abilities in German and feel less at ease when speaking, reading and writing Sorbian or listening to a Sorbian conversation. Therefore, one could argue that it would be easier for most of them to abandon Sorbian and speak German instead. The fate of the Sorbian language is thus greatly dependent on the will of each Sorbian speaker to maintain his/her language.

#### **2.4 THE SPEECH COMMUNITY AND ITS COMMITMENT TO THE LANGUAGE**

The future of a language strongly depends upon the parents' decision on what language to speak to their children. After all, a language must be transmitted if it is to live on. Figures on language use at home can therefore be used as an index of the future of a language. The respondents of the Sorbian language use survey gave the following information about the current language spoken in their home:

	Sorbian	Sorbian and German	German	No Answer
At mealtime	23.6%	48.0%	28.0%	0.3%
With father	18.9%	61.1%	19.6%	0.3%
With mother	35.1%	21.0%	38.5%	5.5%
With partner	38.9%	15.5%	29.1%	16.6%
With children	38.5%	18.2%	30.7%	12.5%
With other relations	24.7%	14.9%	33.4%	27.0%

(<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/sorab/an/el/el.html>)

Obviously, the percentage of those speaking Sorbian with their children (38.5%) is significantly higher than the percentage speaking German (30.7%). This is more surprising as the proportion of respondents speaking Sorbian to their parents (mother: 35.1%, father: 18.9%) is smaller than the proportion of those speaking German (mother: 38.5%; father: 19.6%). Furthermore, the respondents more often use both languages when speaking to their parents (father: 61.1%; mother: 21%) than when speaking to their children (18.2%). Thus, it seems to be a conscious decision by many parents to speak Sorbian to their children, despite the fact that a majority believes that their knowledge of German is probably better than their knowledge of Sorbian.

As we have seen above, repeated measures are required to study change over time. If the research design does not allow a longitudinal study, retrospective questions can be used to add a time dimension to the results. These questions, however, rely heavily on the memory of

the informants and thus contain the risk of inaccurate recall. The Euromosaic survey used such questions to obtain information on the change in the communities' use of Sorbian:

	As Child				Now			
	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Streets	56%	26%	14%	4%	29%	26%	31%	14%
Shops	44%	29%	17%	10%	21%	27%	32%	20%
Church	60%	13%	6%	21%	46%	14%	15%	25%
Clubs	57%	15%	5%	23%	39%	27%	10%	24%

(<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/sorab/an/el/el.html>)

It appears that there has been a decline in the use of Sorbian in all of the four contexts mentioned above, particularly on the streets and in shops. The informants were further asked about the opportunities available to meet Sorbian speakers in local activities such as sports or cultural activities. As few as 15% of the informants claimed that most people they met at sports activities spoke Sorbian and the same number used Sorbian in such activities. Yet almost half of the informants claimed to meet Sorbian speakers at cultural activities and the same number mostly spoke Sorbian on these occasions (<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/sorab/an/el/el.html>).

Among the cultural activities most popular with the Sorbs are theatre groups and choirs, with the first Sorbian choir festival being held as far back as 1845. Today, the Domowina (the umbrella association for the Sorbs and Sorbian associations) organises many cultural events and activities, such as the 2003 international folklore festival. Other institutions that support Sorbian culture are the Sorbian National Ensemble (song and dance), the German-Sorbian Folk Theatre, the House of Sorbian Folk Culture, the Sorbian Museums in Bautzen and Cottbus and the academic society Maćica Serbska that promotes academic involvement with the history, language and culture of the Sorbs (<http://home.t-online.de/home/320051871311/dom.html>). Apart from these professional institutions there are several local church choirs as well as folk and pop groups that use Sorbian in their repertoire. The official cultural policy is implemented by the Foundation for the Sorbian People, which is a joint instrument of the Federation and the 'Länder' of Saxony and Brandenburg. It supports institutions involved in the preservation of the culture, art and homeland of the Sorbs, as well as the documentation of Sorbian culture, the Sorbian language and cultural identity (<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/sorab/an/il/il.html>).

Although these professional cultural institutions and the many Sorbian traditions still alive in the bilingual territory help to maintain a Sorbian identity, they are not necessarily so helpful in maintaining the Sorbian language. Norberg reports that in Lower Lusatia, Sorbian traditions are no longer occasions in which one speaks Sorbian. In the lower Sorbian village of Hochoza, the language spoken at all Sorbian traditional activities is German. Due to the participation of a large number of German speakers, these are now seen as local rather than Sorbian traditions. Nevertheless, they are still very popular with all generations. Even at local Domowina meetings the language of communication is German, with only around 16% of the inhabitants of Hochoza reporting to speak Sorbian occasionally at those meetings (Norberg 1996b: 126-163). Glaser therefore believes that Sorbian traditions such as Ptaci Kwas (birds' wedding), Zapust (carnival), Křižerio (Easter riding procession), Maiiski Bom (May tree) and Lapanje Kokota (cock plucking) are in danger of becoming "nostalgic exercises". Old-fashioned Sorbian wedding processions are today a regular feature of village festivals in Lower Lusatia. They have become mere performances and are thus "the equivalent of museum pieces". Even the very existence of institutions for the preservation of traditions can be seen as a sign that Sorbian culture no longer evolves naturally (Glaser 2002).

There are, however, signs that the Sorbian community is still trying to evolve naturally and is willing to fight for its rights. In 1998, the Sorbs successfully protested against the drastic cuts in funding with a petition signed by 10,000 people. The funding subsequently remained at its previous level, and in 2002 the federal government promised to keep it stable until 2006 (Elle 2002). Another source of concern for the Sorbs is the brown-coal industry that has already destroyed a large part of the Sorbian homeland. In 1997, the Brandenburg parliament passed a law that permits the destruction of Sorbian villages, although the Brandenburg constitution guarantees the protection of the traditional Sorbian area. Consequently, the lower Sorbian village of Horno was officially dissolved in 1998 in order to allow lignite quarrying to continue. The inhabitants of Horno vehemently protested against the dissolution of their village and tried to avert its destruction with several lawsuits. However, all these efforts were in vain. The last inhabitants of the village were forced to leave in Autumn 2003 (Märkische Allgemeine: 23.9.2003). Not even recognition by the federal government that the country had an over-production of energy led to any policy changes (<http://www.gfbv.de/voelker/europa/Sorben.htm>).

The Sorbs also show a firm commitment in the struggle for education in their language. As a cost-cutting measure, schools have been merged across Saxony regardless of whether they offer Sorbian-medium education or not. This is a serious threat to the already loose network of Sorbian-medium schools. In Summer 2003, the Sorbian secondary school of Crostwitz was shut down, after a lawsuit by Sorbian parents had been rejected (<http://home.t-online.de/home/320051871311/030823.htm>). Protests, numerous demonstrations and letters to influential persons could not prevent it. Nevertheless, these efforts were not entirely in vain. They helped to make the Sorbian people front-page news in Germany's largest newspapers and thus raise national awareness of this people (Michalk 2002: 5).

## **2.5 THE OFFICIAL STATUS OF THE SORBIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

The rights of the Sorbian people are protected at the European, national and the regional level. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages safeguards the rights of the Sorbs at the European level. The Charter however does not contain any regulations on the protection of the Sorbs that surpass the regulations enshrined in the basic law of Germany. The importance of the Charter lies in the fact that it is an instrument for surveying Germany's efforts to protect the Sorbs. Regular reports by a committee of experts on the situation of the Sorbian people serve as a controlling mechanism. At the national level, the rights of the Sorbs are guaranteed in the unification treaty of 1990. Several attempts were made to introduce an article on the protection of minorities into the federal constitution. However, they have proved unsuccessful mainly because the federal parliament failed to distinguish between a policy for indigenous minorities and an immigration policy. As the unification treaty has become part of the German legislative system, the Sorbs have nevertheless been afforded a degree of protection at the federal level. First, the constitution states that anyone has the right to claim Sorbian identity. Second, the maintenance and development of the Sorbian culture and traditions are ensured. Third, Sorbs have the right to cultivate the Sorbian language in public. Since each 'Land' has autonomy in matters of education and culture, the protection and support for the Sorbian language and its people is first and foremost the responsibility of Saxony and Brandenburg (Michalk 2002: 33-71).

The constitution of Saxony grants the Sorbs equal rights with the German people and commits the 'Land' not only to protect but also to support them. In 1999, a 'law on the Sorbs' was established in which the bilingual territory is defined and all municipalities belonging to it are listed. This law further obliges Saxony to establish a Sorbian committee that advises the

parliament on issues relative to this minority. The committee must have five members who are elected by the parliament on the recommendation of the Sorbian institutions. Furthermore, Saxony's 'law for the Sorbs' obliges the government to submit a report on the situation of the Sorbs every three years (Michalk 2002: 52-59). In Brandenburg, the Sorbs are granted 'special rights' and not equal rights, as in Saxony. The right to maintain and cultivate the Sorbian language and culture and their teaching in schools is guaranteed. Brandenburg too has its 'law for the Sorbs' and a Sorbian committee affiliated to the parliament (Michalk 2002: 49-52).

Sorbian education issues are regulated by the education laws of Saxony and Brandenburg. Both 'Länder' guarantee the right to teach Sorbian and the right to Sorbian-medium education in the bilingual territory. This does not mean that each individual Sorbian school is protected and cannot be closed down. Only a guarantee for sufficient provision of Sorbian education can be inferred from the wording of the law (Michalk 2002: 50-68). Sorbian does not enjoy official status in either Saxony or Brandenburg. However, from Saxony's 'guarantee of equal rights' it can be inferred that Sorbian could be used on an equal basis as German in public. Furthermore, the unification treaty assures the Sorbs of the right to use Sorbian in the courts of the bilingual districts. Nevertheless, Sorbian is as good as never used in legal proceedings, as a hearing in Sorbian is only possible if all parties involved speak Sorbian (including the audience). The use of Sorbian in public life is generally marginal. Sorbian is never used in Saxony's parliament, although Sorbian deputies have the right to; no laws are ever translated into Sorbian. The only official documents published in Sorbian in both 'Länder' concern elections and votes (Pastor 1997: 159-163).

The obligation to support the Sorbian language and culture enshrined in the unification treaty resulted in the establishment of the Foundation for the Sorbian People in 1991. It is responsible for the promotion of Sorbian institutions that preserve the culture, language and identity of the Sorbs, for the support of Sorbian education, newspapers and publishers. Half of the money the foundation receives comes from the federal government. Saxony contributes two thirds and Brandenburg one third of the remaining fifty percent (Michalk 2002: 41-49). In 2003, the Foundation was able to distribute 16.38 million Euro (Lausitzer Rundschau: 28.3.2003). The Foundation Council has been repeatedly criticized in the last few years, a fact that may have damaged the reputation of the Sorbs. In 2001, incorrect bookkeeping as well as unreasonably high expenses registered by the Council members came in for criticism. In 1994, the lax supervision of various institutes' expenditure was called into question. Only

3.2% of the money given to the Domowina as used for projects in that year, the rest being used for administration and salaries (Sächsische Zeitung: 5.9.2003).

## **2.6 EDUCATION**

The GDR programme for the promotion of the Sorbian language and culture included the establishment of a Sorbian education system. In Upper Lusatia, there were limited possibilities for studying the language at school before World War II. As soon as the war was over, the first Sorbian-medium education units were established. With the introduction of Saxony's 'law for the protection of the rights of the Sorbian population' in 1948, Sorbian education became legally protected. In 1952, Sorbian language classes were declared compulsory for children with Sorbian parents. All schools in the bilingual territory became so-called B-schools, which means that Sorbian was taught as a second language in up to six lessons per week. In areas where Sorbs were in the majority, Sorbian became the language of instruction in all classes (= A-schools) (Elle 2002).

The establishment and maintenance of Sorbian-medium education and Sorbian language classes were continually threatened by ideological and organisational difficulties. Parents and teachers had reservations about the usefulness of Sorbian-medium education and SED officials feared the Sorbs would become too independent as regards educational issues. In 1962, German was introduced as a medium of instruction for natural sciences classes, a measure that greatly diminished the status of Sorbian in education. In 1964, the status of Sorbian was once more severely restricted with the passing of a decree for the running of Sorbian classes in B-schools. It laid down that Sorbian classes were no longer compulsory for Sorbian pupils and advice to parents on questions concerning Sorbian education became illegal. Furthermore, the number of Sorbian lessons was reduced to two or three per week. As a result, pupils achieved a much lower level of proficiency in Sorbian and the number of participants in Sorbian B-classes fell from 12,000 pupils in 1962 to 3,250 in 1964. In 1968, it became legal once again to advise parents on questions concerning Sorbian education so that the figure of Sorbian B-school pupils rose again. During the 1970s and 1980s, the number of B-school pupils remained at around 5,000 to 6,000 (Elle 2002).

In 2001, only six primary schools and five secondary schools offered Sorbian-medium education. Furthermore, the Sorbian Grammar School of Bautzen offers both the A and B branch of Sorbian education (Elle 2002). The Sorbian Grammar School of Cottbus was a B-

school until 2003, when it switched to bilingual education. Sorbian language classes and two other subjects are now taught through the medium of Sorbian (<http://www.abc.Brandenburg.de/intern.html>). In 2000, 1,400 pupils were enrolled in Sorbian A-schools and around 3,580 in Sorbian B-schools. The latter, however, are an unsatisfactory means of maintaining the Sorbian language. The number of Sorbian lessons varies from one to three per week, and the projected level of proficiency is rather low. By the end of secondary school, Sorbian B-school pupils are merely expected to be able to speak Sorbian in everyday situations (Elle 2002). A problem for A- and B-schools in Saxony is the status of Sorbian as a mother tongue. Since it is not considered a foreign language, pupils in A- and B-schools have to learn two other foreign languages in addition to Sorbian. Many parents are therefore reluctant to send their children to Sorbian classes for fear of loading them with an additional burden (Pastor 1997: 136).

These reservations have long been reflected in the continually sinking number of pupils in Sorbian A-schools. As many of those schools were in danger of being shut down for lack of pupils, the Sorbian Schools Association had to find a way to save Sorbian education. In 1998, the Witaj project was launched in order to gain greater acceptance of the Sorbian language amongst the Sorbian as well as the German population. Witaj means 'welcome' in Sorbian and is the name for a bilingual immersion programme on the basis of 'one person one language' ([http://www.sachsen-macht-schule.de/smkmeld/sorb\\_gs.html](http://www.sachsen-macht-schule.de/smkmeld/sorb_gs.html)). The Witaj-project was set up in nurseries and kindergartens with considerable success. In 2003, 365 children were enrolled in Witaj nurseries (Sächsische Zeitung: 1.8.2003). It is the aim of Saxony's education department to replace A- and B-schools with bilingual Sorbian-German schools ([http://www.sachsen-macht-schule.de/smkmeld/sorb\\_gs.html](http://www.sachsen-macht-schule.de/smkmeld/sorb_gs.html)). Several A-schools now also offer bilingual classes and some B-schools are interested in the project. The B-schools of Schleife and Hoyerswerda have already introduced their first bilingual classes (Sächsische Zeitung: 7.4.2003).

The successful launch of the Witaj project shows that the Sorbian Schools Association is able to convince parents of the advantages of a bilingual education. The establishment of bilingual education units in B-schools furthermore proves that there is still an interest in the Sorbian language. Unfortunately, there is currently a lack of Sorbian-speaking teachers. Consequently, Brandenburg has established an extra two years course for teachers with advanced knowledge of Sorbian who would like to teach in a bilingual school

(<http://www.abc.Brandenburg.de/intern.html>). It is hoped that the shortage of Sorbian teachers can be overcome quickly, so that a network of bilingual schools can be established. Parents should have the possibility to send their children to bilingual schools wherever they live in Lusatia. Only then can the region rightly be called bilingual.

## 2.7 MEDIA

Today, the Sorbs receive information in Sorbian via newspapers, magazines, books, radio and television programmes. Sorbian newspapers have a long history in Lusatia: in 1842 a precursor of today's Upper Sorbian newspaper *Serbske Nowiny* was established and in 1848 the first newspaper in Lower Sorbian appeared. Today, the Sorbian people have a daily newspaper, the *Serbske Nowiny*, which is published entirely in Upper Sorbian and two weekly newspapers: the *Katholski Posol* and the *Nowy Casnik*. *Katholski Posol* is the newspaper published by the Catholic Sorbs of Upper Lusatia and *Nowy Casnik*, the newspaper for the Lower Sorbs. Furthermore, a number of magazines appear monthly, such as *Pomhaj Boh*, a magazine published by the Protestant Sorbs of Upper Lusatia, *Płomjo/Płomje*, a children's magazine, *Serbska Šula*, an education journal and *Rozhlad*, a journal for Sorbian culture and art (<http://home.t-online.de/home/320051871311/medijw.htm>). The publishing house of the *Domowina* issues between 40 and 50 Sorbian books per year, 25-30 of which are children's books, books of poetry and fiction, and 15-20 works of non-fiction (Tschernokoshewa 1994: 124).

Considering that all Sorbs are bilingual and have access to hundreds of German newspapers and periodicals as well as to one of the world's largest book markets, it is important to discover if and how often Sorbian newspapers and books are actually read. The Euromosaic survey received the following answers from their respondents:

Frequency	Sorbian Books	Sorbian Newspapers	German Books	German Newspapers
Often	21%	46%	33%	64%
Sometimes	29%	20%	43%	27%
Seldom	27%	17%	19%	5%
Never	23%	18%	4%	4%

(<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/sorab/an/el/el.html>)

It appears that the Sorbian people are a highly literate society. Half of the respondents regularly read Sorbian newspapers and two thirds regularly read German newspapers. The

proportion of Sorbian reading activities is rather high, considering the non-existence of a Lower Sorbian daily newspaper and the relatively small number of Sorbian books published each year. These figures are more surprising as 84% of the respondents in the same survey claimed to have very good reading abilities in German, whereas only 58% claimed to read Sorbian very well.

Sorbian radio programmes have existed since 1946, when Radio Praha began to broadcast a Sorbian programme to support Sorbian reconstruction efforts. Today, Central German Radio broadcasts 21.5 hours per week in Upper Sorbian. Broadcasting times are from Monday to Saturday between 5a.m. and 8 a.m., on Sundays between 11 a.m. and 12.30 p.m., and every Monday between 8p.m. and 10 p.m.. There is a mixture of news, Sorbian pop and folk music, cultural features, children's and language programmes. On Monday evenings a youth programme is broadcasted (<http://www.mdr.de/mdr1-radio-sachsen/sorbisch/>). Radio Berlin-Brandenburg broadcasts in Lower Sorbian 11.5 hours per week: on Monday to Friday from 12p.m. to 1p.m., and from 7p.m. to 8p.m. (repeat) and on Sundays from 12.30p.m. to 2p.m.. Due to the limited airtime, spoken features (news, radio plays, literature, reports on Sorbian life and culture and children's programmes) account for a large part of the programming ([http://www.rbb-online.de/\\_/hoerfunk/sorbisch\\_jsp.html](http://www.rbb-online.de/_/hoerfunk/sorbisch_jsp.html)). The limited time available is a problem for both Upper and Lower Sorbian radio, especially since Sorbian radio has to make programmes for all social groups and to play all kinds of music. Listening figures show how difficult it is for Sorbian radio to make programmes that suit all tastes: only 43% of Euromosaic respondents regularly listened to Sorbian radio, whereas 47% did not listen to it at all (<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/sorab/an/el/el.html>). Although Sorbian radio broadcasting time is limited, it still plays an important role in promoting and cultivating the Sorbian language and culture. Each year, Lower Sorbian Radio alone commissions around 100 new titles across all music genres (Tschernokoshewa 1994: 132).

Since 1992, a Sorbian TV programme is broadcast every four weeks on Saturdays from 1.30p.m. to 2p.m. by Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg. A similar programme has existed in Saxony since 1996. The programmes focus on Sorbian history, traditions, arts and crafts (Michalk 2002: 69). Contrary to Sorbian radio, Sorbian television is unable to play an important role in maintaining and promoting the language. With airtime of 30 minutes per month, Sorbian television is of only symbolic value. Sorbian TV programmes can, however,

help to raise the prestige of the language in the eyes of the Sorbs and Germans and raise awareness of the Sorbian culture among a wider public.

## **2.8 LANGUAGE ATTITUDES**

According to a survey conducted in 1987, 74% of the Sorbs throughout Lusatia considered the Sorbian language the most important characteristic of their identity. Nevertheless, attitudes towards Sorbian differ greatly from region to region. Only in the Catholic region of Upper Lusatia is Sorbian generally held in high esteem by both Sorbs and Germans. And only there is Sorbian regularly used in all domains on an equal basis with German. In some domains such as religion, education and culture Sorbian is even in a dominant position. The Catholic villages are also the only regions where Sorbian speakers are in the majority. In those villages, a certain constraint to speak the language to authorities, such as teachers and priests, can be observed. The Catholic Church is said to have always had a high regard for Sorbian. This fact and its usefulness in other public domains seem to be the reason for the high prestige of Sorbian in the Catholic region. However, Elle observed that even in these villages the prestige of the language is falling among children and young adults (Elle 1999: 154-162).

Contrary to the Catholic Church, the Protestant church never showed a high regard for the Sorbian language and can even be said to have favoured assimilation. This is just one of several reasons why the prestige of Sorbian is not particularly high in the Protestant part of Lusatia. Many people doubt the utility of having knowledge of a language that only one inhabitant out of ten actually speaks (Elle 1999: 155-157). In Lower Lusatia, attitudes towards Lower Sorbian are further influenced by a sense of inferiority with regard to Upper Sorbian speakers. In the past, linguistic differences between Upper and Lower Sorbian have often been underestimated by the Domowina and other Sorbian organisations. This has created a sense of inferiority among the Lower Sorbian speakers. One Lower Sorbian respondent even compared the relations between Lower and Upper Lusatia to those of East and West Germany (Norberg 1996b: 158-159). Furthermore, the Lower Sorbs continued to suffer the after-effects of the anti-Sorbian policies of the Prussian and Nazi regimes even after World War II. In Norberg's survey of the Lower Sorbian village Hochoza, many older Sorbs told of discrimination outside the bilingual villages. Elderly Sorbian women have often been ridiculed for their traditional dress, and some reported that shopkeepers had always served them last (Norberg 1996b: 72).

In view of these negative memories, it is not surprising that a majority of the older generation answered 'Sorbian has no prestige' when asked about their reasons for holding negative sentiments towards Sorbian. However, 84% of the same generation also reported to be glad to be able to speak Sorbian. The older generation further showed the most positive attitude towards bilingualism: more than 70% agreed with the statements 'bilingualism is an intellectual advantage' and 'bilingualism is a cultural advantage'. In the second and third generation only around 40% agreed with these statements. As a reason for their scepticism, they answered that no advantages were to be gained from being able to speak Sorbian. The limited usefulness of Sorbian outside the family is thus the most important reason for the negative attitudes of the Sorbs of Hochoza towards their language. In judging the value of Sorbian, the Sorbs generally compared it to the majority language of German and not to other minority languages. It is not surprising then that Sorbian fares badly. However, Norberg discovered that people's attitudes towards Sorbian do not always correspond to their actual use of the language. She found people who declared not to care for Sorbian deliberately cultivating it in their families. Others pronounced themselves in favour of Sorbian but did not use the language at all. Norberg offers the history of the Lower Sorbs as the reason for this reaction: the long period of repression before 1945 and the following forty years of observation by the state have left their mark (Norberg 1996b: 1114-1119).

In a bilingual area, where only around ten per cent of the population have a knowledge of the minority language, the attitude of the majority towards the language can be decisive. In Hochoza, where German speakers are in the majority, their attitude towards the Sorbs and Sorbian is as follows: 75% agree that Sorbian should be spoken in the village, but more than 50% want Sorbs to speak German in the presence of German speakers. It is therefore the Germans who dictate what language is used in public. Some German speakers even go so far as to generally disagree with subsidising Sorbian culture and organisations. The recent introduction of bilingual road signs was often criticised as a waste of money. These negative sentiments have, however, to be seen in the context of rising unemployment and generally difficult economic circumstances (Norberg 1996b: 72-77).

### **3 THE CURRENT SITUATION OF SCOTTISH GAELIC**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION: THE SCOTTISH GAELIC LANGUAGE AND ITS HISTORY**

Scottish Gaelic is a Celtic language and forms along with Irish and Manx Gaelic the Goidelic branch of that family. Strong evidence suggests that it must have been brought to Scotland by Irish immigrants. Although it is not clear when and where they originally landed in Scotland, it is assumed that this coincided with the decline of Roman power in Britain during the late fourth century AD. The first important settlement of the Gaels was that of the Dál Riata in Argyll from where they expanded their territory fairly rapidly in the West of Scotland. Further penetration north- and eastwards was achieved at the expense of the earlier inhabitants, the Picts. They were united with the Gaels under a Gaelic king in the middle of the ninth century. This appears to have been a conscious decision resulting from political pressures in connection with the advent of the Norsemen. They came first as raiders and later settled on the north and west mainland, in the islands of Shetland and Orkney, the Hebrides and Man (MacAulay 1992: 137-138).

By the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Gaelic was the chief language in the domains of politics, administration, justice and culture in a Scottish kingdom roughly coterminous with present-day Scotland. Gaelic has, however, never been the sole language of Scotland. On its arrival, it was in competition with the Brittonic languages and English and from the reign of Malcom III (1054-96) with Norman French. Gradually, Gaelic lost its pre-eminence at court, among the aristocracy, in politics and religion to Norman French which spread through the introduction of feudalism over an increasingly wider area. Later, Norman French was replaced by 'Inglis', a form of northern English, as the prestige tongue. It appears, however, that the classical literary form of Gaelic retained its status well into the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The focus of Gaelic lay in the West, where the language retained its ties with Ireland until the demise of the 'Lordship of the Isles' in 1493. When the Scottish Privy Council in 1616 issued a decree to strengthen the use of English and abolish Gaelic, the language had already retreated to the Highlands and Hebrides (MacAulay 1992: 141-145).

The decree of 1616 established a set of negative reactions to the Gaelic language which have remained entrenched in official attitudes to some degree until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Scottish and British Parliaments subsequently passed a number of acts aimed at disarming and breaking the clans and outlawing Highland dress and music. When schools were set up in

every parish it was decreed that teaching should be in English. The Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge that was set up to bring 'education' to the Highlands even maintained that it was not possible to teach children literacy in Gaelic. It was not until the establishment of the Gaelic Schools Societies at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that a popular and successful Gaelic school system developed. However, the Education (Scotland) Act of 1874 ignored the existence of Gaelic with the result that the language was once again left out of the curriculum. Official recognition of Gaelic was generally very slow and partial until well into the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Maintenance of the language was supported by the various Gaelic Societies that were founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially An Comunn Gaidhealach, the Highland Society (MacAulay 1992: 145-146).

Today, Scottish Gaelic is spoken in a number of dialects that are often categorized as a 'central dialect' and a 'peripheral' group of dialects. While the 'central' dialect is characterised as largely innovating and homogenous, the 'peripheral' group is conceived as more heterogeneous and fragmented. "The Gaelic of the Hebridean region as a whole largely goes with the 'central' dialect while that of the mainland and more outlining areas, where it is now generally moribund or non-extant, tends towards the characteristics of the 'peripheral group'" (Lamb 2001: 7). Within the Hebrides it is possible to make a division between the dialect of Lewis in the North and that of the Southern Hebridean islands on the basis of significant phonological variations. Hebrideans are further able to distinguish between the dialects of each island and often place each other with remarkable accuracy.

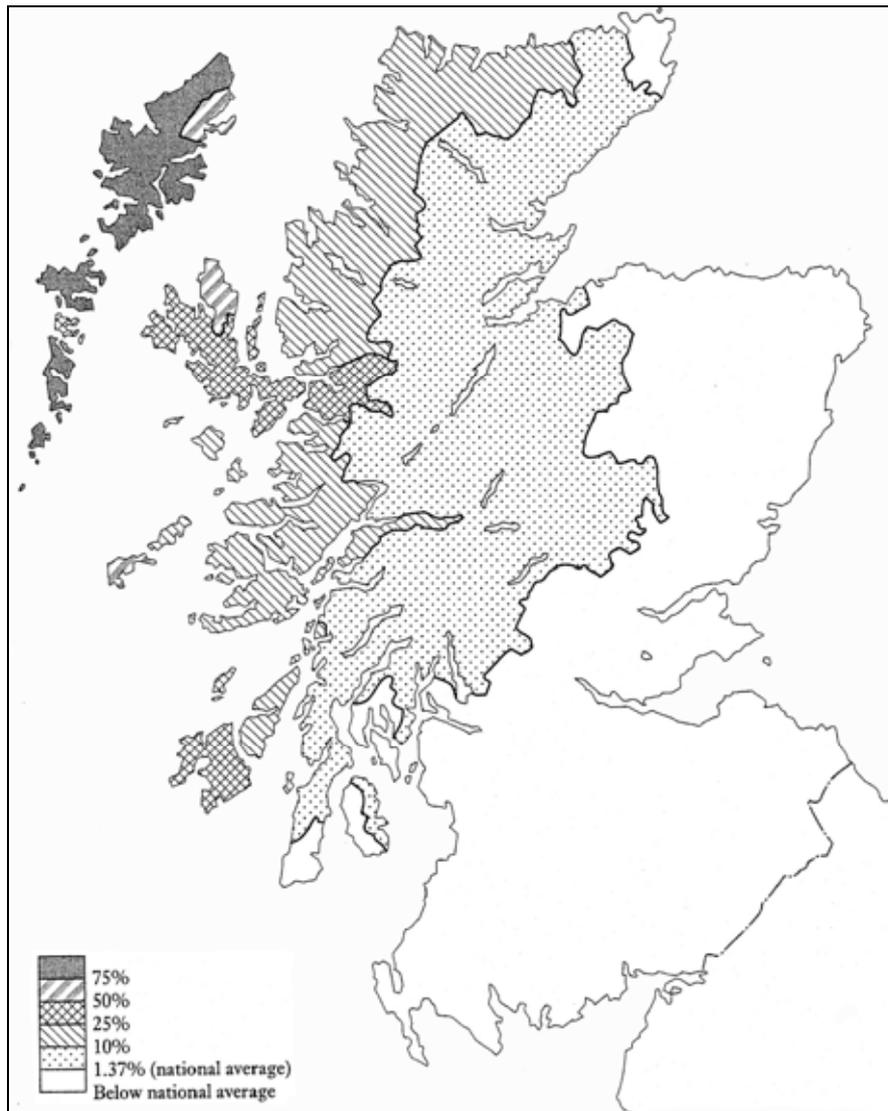
The dialectal variation of Scottish Gaelic can best be explained by the aid of the greater Goidelic continuum that at one time stretched from the southern end of Ireland to the north-western Isles of Scotland and included the Isle of Man in its south-eastern periphery (Lamb 2001:7-8). Intelligibility between living dialects appears to vary depending on the dialects and the speakers themselves, i.e. whether or not they have even heard other dialects. As there is no officially recognised standard form of Gaelic, the Gaelic presented by radio and television serves as a model. Furthermore, a standardised spelling has been laid down by the Scottish Examination Board for examination purposes. It is taught in schools as the only acceptable version. Writers too are gradually using this new spelling (Bogenschneider and MacKay 1996: 251).

### **3.2 GLOBALISATION AND MOBILITY**

The Gaelic community is long since accustomed to people leaving the Gaidhealtachd (the traditional Gaelic-speaking area) to search for work elsewhere. During the Highland Clearances (1782-1853), many Highlanders were driven from their land by big landowners. Entire peasant communities were transferred from their traditional settlements to individual holdings along the coast and in some areas people were even encouraged to emigrate. When the Highlands were hit by harvest failures many people emigrated to the British colonies. The Clearances abated in the 1860s, but the migration of Gaels to North America and in particular to Nova Scotia continued (Glaser 2002). For the year 1880, it has been estimated that there were about 80,000 Gaelic speakers on Cape Breton Island alone. Today, Gaelic is in a very precarious position in Nova Scotia. By 1971, only 1,420 people were speaking the language (MacAulay 1992: 148).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, migration of the Gaels from the Hebrides and the West coast to urban Lowland Scotland continued. In 2001, 44.5% of all Gaelic speakers lived in Lowland Scotland (MacKinnon 2003b). Economic pressure and a lack of higher education facilities were the main reasons why many young Gaels left the Gaidhealtachd. In the patriarchal Gaelic society, females in particular sought further education or work elsewhere, whereas males tended to remain in the community to take over the family business. Although this system was intended to secure family stability, it often had a counter-productive effect on the Gaelic language and culture. Attempts to diversify the economy in the Gaelic heartland often further weakened the position of Gaelic. Whereas some modern small-scale industries, such as fish farming, have helped to stabilise local employment patterns, others brought in large numbers of skilled workers from elsewhere – a major threat for the Gaelic language and culture (<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/il/il.html>). Today, Gaelic has almost no role in the private commercial sector. Posts that require a knowledge of Gaelic are almost exclusively to be found in the education sector, in media/publishing and in cultural institutions (McLeod 2001). Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gaels no longer need to migrate to predominantly English-speaking areas to come into contact with the dominant language and culture. English is the language of business even in the Gaelic heartland. Mass media and tourism too bring the English language to the remotest places of the Gaidhealtachd.

### 3.3 DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS



Distribution of Gaelic speakers in 1991 (Source: MacKinnon, K. 2000: 46).

The traditional Gaelic-speaking area or Gaidhealtachd comprises the Western Isles (Eileanan Siar), the Highland as well as the council areas of Argyll and Bute. In 1881, most people in the Gaidhealtachd spoke Gaelic. 87.8% of all Gaels were living in this region and some 12.2% in the Lowland counties. Today, however, the 'Highland/Lowland split' is approaching the 50/50 mark. In 2001, only 55.5% of all Gaelic speakers lived in the Gaidhealtachd, and 44.5% in the rest of Scotland. Between 1991 and 2001, the traditional Gaelic areas saw the sharpest decline of the language: the Western Isles region lost 19.6% of its Gaelic speakers, the Highland council 18.0% and Argyll and Bute 14.7% (MacKinnon 2003a).

With 59.3% of all inhabitants speaking Gaelic in 2001, the Western Isles council area is today the only administrative region where the Gaels are in the majority. In the Highland council area, Gaelic speakers make up 5.8% of the population and in Argyll and Bute 4.6 %. Out of a total of 58,652 Gaelic speakers, 15,723 (27%) were living in the Western Isles, 12,069 (21%) in the Highlands, 4,158 (7%) in Argyll and Bute, 5731 (10%) in Glasgow City and the remaining 20,971 (35%) dispersed over the Lowland counties (<http://www.cnag.org.uk/gspeakcensus01.htm>). The fact that less than 27% of Gaelic speakers live in the only administrative region where the Gaels are in the majority is very problematic for the future of the language. The Western Isles' loss of 19.6% of their Gaelic speakers within only ten years should therefore be taken very seriously. The region generally suffers from a loss of inhabitants: the total population dropped by 10.5% in the same period. The Western Isles' loss of Gaelic speakers is also deplorable because it is the region where Gaelic is best protected. The Western Isles council is the only local authority in Scotland to have a full bilingual policy. Apart from this recognition of Gaelic in the Western Isles, a Gaelic or bilingual territory has never been defined at the national level (=ICSP 2000).

It is imperative to specify that the figure of 58,652 Gaelic speakers counted in the 2001 census does not contain any information about the linguistic proficiency of these people. The 2001 Scotland census only asked for an ability to understand, speak, read, or write Scottish Gaelic. It therefore has to be assumed that the figure of 58,652 also contains many Gaelic learners and people with only scant knowledge of Gaelic and that the number of fluent Gaelic speakers could be significantly lower. The table below presents the 2001 census results as well as the results of the language ability question from previous years:

Census Year	Speaking Gaelic	Reading and writing	Understanding Gaelic
1981	79,307	82,620	n/a
1991	65,978	69,510	n/a
2001	58,652	65,674	92,396

(MacKinnon 2003a)

The rising number of people learning Gaelic as a foreign language is reflected in the significantly higher numbers of people being able to read (65,674) and understand (92,396) Gaelic than those who can speak it (58,652). If a foreign language is learnt in class, the ability to speak the language is usually acquired after the ability to understand and read it.

The following table presents the census figures of the last 120 years and shows the distribution of Gaelic speakers over the Highland and Lowland counties:

Census Year	Total Gaelic speakers	Monolingual GS	% GS in Highland counties	% GS in Lowland counties	% GS in Scotland
1881	231,594	n/a	87.84	12.16	6.76
1891	254,415	43,738	72.55	27.45	6.84
1901	230,806	28,106	72.33	27.67	5.57
1911	202,398	18,400	72.24	27.76	4.56
1921	158,779	9,829	75.69	24.31	3.47
1931	136,135	6,716	74.47	25.53	2.97
1951	95,447	2,178	73.09	26.91	1.98
1961	80,978	974	70.86	29.14	1.66
1971	88,892	477	57.32	42.68	1.79
1981	79,307	n/a	60.53	39.47	1.64
1991	65,978	n/a	60.97	39.03	1.37
2001	58,652	n/a	55.51	44.48	1.21

(MacKinnon 2003a)

Gaelic speakers have never been as few and as dispersed as in 2001. The picture of the last 120 years is one of fairly consistent and rapid decline. The two instances of increases (in 1891 and 1971) were the result of changes to the census question rather than actual overall increase in the number of speakers (MacKinnon 2003b). However, it appears that the decline of Gaelic was slower in the 1990s than in the 1980s. While Gaelic lost 16.8% of its speakers between 1981 and 1991, it 'only' lost 11.1 % of its speakers between 1991 and 2001. The main reason for this slowdown may lie in the significant growth of Gaelic-medium education units in the last decade. Nevertheless, the fact that the language is still losing speakers and has consistently done so over the last hundred years should not be overlooked. Today, the language only has a quarter of the speakers it had one hundred years ago: the number of speakers fell from 230,806 in 1901 to 58,652 in 2001. Furthermore, in 1901, Gaelic was probably the mother tongue of most of the Gaelic-speaking population, whereas today most Gaelic speakers have a better knowledge of English, as the results of the Euromosaic survey conducted in 1994/95 show:

Gaelic	English			
	Underst.	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Very good	83%	73%	43%	32%
Quite good	14%	19%	33%	34%
Some	2%	7%	22%	25%
None	1%	1%	3%	10%

(Source: <http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/el/el.html>)

Although most of the 300 respondents in this survey lived in the traditional Gaelic-speaking areas of the Hebrides (201) and Highlands (45), the majority believed that their abilities to understand, speak, read and write English were better than their linguistic abilities in Gaelic. This is certainly not a good basis for the viability of Gaelic, as its future will depend to a great extent on the will of each Gaelic speaker to use the language. Another source for concern is the age structure of the Gaelic community. As the table below shows the Gaelic language group has a disproportionate number of elderly speakers:

Age-group	Total persons in Scotland	Gaelic speakers	Gaelic sps as % of total age group	% Gaelic speakers
3-15	810,546	7,435	0.917	12.746
16-24	566,477	5,385	0.951	9.231
25-34	699,397	6,612	0.945	11.335
35-44	780,864	7,816	1.001	13.399
45-54	688,576	8,644	1.255	14.818
55-64	549,732	8,146	1.482	13.964
65-74	446,033	7,196	1.613	12.336
75+	358,867	7,099	1.978	12.170
Total	4,900,492	58,333	1.190	100.00

(<http://www.cnag.org.uk/01censusagegroup.htm>)

With 1.61% speaking Gaelic in the 65-74 age group and 1.98% in the 75+ age group, Gaelic is a language of the elderly. The proportion of young Gaelic speakers aged 3-24 years is, at 21.98%, quite dramatically reduced. It is said that a proportion of at least 33.3% is needed for language-group reproduction. However, some progress has been made in the last few years: the proportion of Gaelic speakers in the 3-15 age group slightly increased between 1991 and 2001 from 10.7% to 12.7%, a trend that must be due to the establishment of several Gaelic-medium education units during this period (MacKinnon 2003a).

### **3.4 THE SPEECH COMMUNITY AND ITS COMMITMENT TO THE LANGUAGE**

Data on language transmission clearly shows how difficult it is to pass Gaelic on to one's children outside a Gaelic-speaking community. The 1991 census revealed low rates of second-generation transmission outside the Gaidhealtachd. In the Lowland counties, only 60% of families with two Gaelic-speaking parents raised children who spoke the language, while in the Western Isles the percentage was 80.7%, and 87.1% in Skye and Lochalsh. The difference between the Gaidhealtachd and the Lowlands was even more dramatic among families that only had one Gaelic-speaking parent. In the Western Isles, 24% of these families had Gaelic-speaking children, and in Skye and Lochalsh 40.4%. In the rest of Scotland only

6.8% of the 2,460 families of this type raised their children bilingually. However, the numbers for the Western Isles, Skye and Lochalsh are rather low too, if one considers that these are figures from the Gaelic heartland. Recent research shows how difficult it has become to have a Gaelic-speaking household, even in the Western Isles. In 1998, North and South Uist were investigated for L1 (not necessarily monoglot) Gaelic-speaking children between the ages of 3 and 5. Out of a population of 6,000 only 20 such children could be located (Lamb 2001: 9-10). However, as Lamb (2001: 11) writes, many parents in the Western Isles wish to pass Gaelic on to their children:

Many Island parents begin child-rearing hoping to have a Gaelic household, which does not seem too exotic, as it would have been their experience when young. However, once their children begin making steady contact with the outside, English almost invariably takes over in a predictable pattern. Increasingly, children begin answering back in English until parents give in and Gaelic gets consigned to imperatives and choice phrases rather than being a conversational medium.

Television, school and a non-Gaelic-speaking neighbourhood are the main reasons why so many families fail to maintain Gaelic as the language used in their home. Results of the Euromosaic survey confirm that Gaelic is used less and less in the family:

	Always Gaelic	Gaelic > English	Gaelic = English	English > Gaelic	Always English	No answer
Mealtime	70	31	47	43	74	35
With father	51	14	17	10	32	176
With mother	59	21	27	12	27	154
With partner	51	17	26	24	66	116
With children	39	21	32	29	57	122
With in-laws	47	27	15	17	55	139

(<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/el/el.html>)

Out of a total of 300 respondents, only 39 consistently speak Gaelic to their children, while the number of those who speak Gaelic with the older generation, i.e. with their fathers and mothers was significantly higher (51 with their father and 59 with their mother). English is increasingly used when speaking to the younger generation. 57 of the respondents who had children consistently spoke English with them. These results show a tendency towards the decline in frequency of Gaelic transmission. One reason may lie in the high number of marriages between Gaelic and non-Gaelic speakers. Estimates of the 1991 census data suggest that only 34.1% of families who had a Gaelic-speaking adult were families in which both parents spoke the language. 12.7% were Gaelic-speaking single parents, while 53.2% were families in which only either the mother or the father spoke Gaelic (<http://www.uoc.edu/>

[euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/il/il.html](http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/il/il.html)). These estimates are reflected in this survey: only 68 respondents mostly or always spoke Gaelic with their partners, whereas 90 mostly or always spoke English.

As we have seen, the incidence of Gaelic being passed on to the next generation is falling. However, for the future of Gaelic it is not only important that the language is passed on to the children, but also that it is actually used by them. There are already signs that the use of Gaelic is declining among Gaelic-speaking children, teenagers and young adults. For instance, North and South Uist no longer have a school where Gaelic is the language of conversation among pupils. Gaelic speakers under 30 almost exclusively use English when speaking to their peers. According to Lamb, the younger generation only speaks Gaelic in a handful of situations, such as when speaking to the eldest members of the community, when being paid to talk on the radio or television, or at the pub after a considerable amount of "tongue-loosening" (Lamb 2001: 12-13). Answers to the Euromosaic survey confirm the restricted use of Gaelic among children and young adults. There are almost no leisure activities during which children regularly speak Gaelic. English is almost exclusively spoken at sports activities, or with the scouts. Even in piping and other music groups, Gaelic is rarely spoken. The only leisure activity for children where Gaelic is the dominant language are the Sradagan youth clubs, an institution especially established to promote the Gaelic language among children (<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/el/el.html>). As Gaelic is so rarely used by the younger generations, Lamb warns that the 2001 census figures may offer too bright a picture for Gaelic: "figures will need to be tempered in terms of a substantial proportion of returns who, regardless of their proficiency in the language, contribute a negligible proportion of overall Gaelic output" (2001:13).

However, the use of Gaelic has not only decreased among young people. Answers to the Euromosaic survey show that the importance of Gaelic as a community language has generally declined during the last three or four decades. Respondents gave the following answers concerning their use of Gaelic in the community both as a child and as an adult:

	As Child				Now			
	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Streets	85%	4%	2%	8%	42%	32%	12%	13%
Shops	81%	5%	4%	10%	36%	30%	14%	20%
Church	84%	5%	3%	8%	45%	29%	10%	15%
Clubs	63%	14%	7%	16%	25%	38%	15%	22%

(Source: <http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/el/el.html>)

Evidently, the use of Gaelic in the community has significantly decreased within only one generation. The number of respondents who reported frequent use of Gaelic in public in the 1990s is only half the number of those who reported frequent use in public as a child. However, answers to this sort of retrospective question should be interpreted cautiously, as respondents may have had different communities as their reference points (<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/el/el.html>). With only 45% of the respondents stating that Gaelic is regularly used in religious services, the Church cannot be credited with a special role in language maintenance. Although there may be sufficient Gaelic-speaking ministers, they are often employed in non-Gaelic-speaking parishes. However, in the Western Isles the situation is not too bleak: well over half of all services are in Gaelic and almost all clergy of all denominations speak the language (<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/il/il.html>).

As both Lamb's research and the Euromosaic survey show, the decline of Gaelic in the community is undisputable. However, the situation would not look so bad if Gaelic speakers would seize every opportunity they have to speak the language. During the Euromosaic survey, 84 out of 300 Gaelic speakers stated that they have the possibility to speak Gaelic in restaurants, but only 37 did; 151 could have spoken Gaelic in shops, but only 108 actually did. A similar disparity could be found in other contexts such as the bank (66/34) and the hairdresser (78/54). It appears then that many Gaels simply lack the determination to use Gaelic consistently (<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/el/el.html>).

However, there are also those Gaels that are very concerned about the future of Gaelic and show a firm commitment to improving its status. In recent years, a number of language activist groups were formed to fight for a better acceptance of the language in various spheres of public life. Among those are organisations concerned with introducing bilingual road signs, increasing Gaelic television coverage or improving the right to use Gaelic in legal proceedings (Thomson 1985: 270). In 1984, Comunn na Gàidhlig (CnaG), a Gaelic umbrella organisation was established to act as a co-ordinating Gaelic development agency. CnaG is a company with charitable status and is largely publicly funded. It is involved in a number of projects such as introducing Gaelic-medium education or establishing Sradagan youth clubs for Gaelic-speaking children. One of CnaG's major projects is its Secure Status Campaign, which aims at improving the legal situation of the language "in all walks of Scottish national life [...] in education, broadcasting, local government and the working practices of the

Scottish Parliament" (<http://www.cnag.org.uk/projects.htm>). A number of organisations and initiatives assist CnaG in promoting the Gaelic language and culture, among them Iomairt Cholm Cille, An Comunn Gaidhealach and Cli. Iomairt Cholm Cille is an initiative to develop relationships between the Irish and Scottish Gaelic communities (<http://www.colmcille.net>), while An Comunn Gaidhealach annually organises the Royal National Mod, the major festival of the Gaelic language, arts and culture (<http://www.the-mod.co.uk>). Another important language organisation is Cli which represents learners of Gaelic including those who have gone through Gaelic-medium education. Its aims are to promote the learning of Gaelic as well as disseminating information on the language and its status (<http://www.cli.org.uk/cgi-bin/main/about>).

Despite the variety of language organisations, it is not easy for Gaelic speakers to make the Scottish government heed their requests. For instance, there is widespread frustration among parents of children in Gaelic-medium education. Almost twenty years after the establishment of the first Gaelic-medium education units, their legal status is still unclear. Parents have to fight for every new Gaelic-medium education unit and not all of their efforts are successful. Comann nam Pàrant, the organisation for parents of children in Gaelic-medium education, is trying to improve the position of Gaelic in education by fighting for a better legal status of the language. In 2001, it launched a public petition requesting the establishment of a Gaelic Language Act (<http://www.cnag.org.uk/beurla/duill13.htm>). However, on this point too, the Gaelic community must be very patient.

### **3.5 THE OFFICIAL STATUS OF THE GAELIC LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

Scottish Gaelic is not an official language of Scotland. Only Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (the Western Isles council) has a bilingual policy. It is aimed at giving people from the area the choice between Gaelic and English in as many situations as possible. Official publications are published in both languages and the council provides a significant number of Gaelic-medium units within its primary schools (<http://www.w-isles.gov.uk>). At the national level, there are several legislative measures relative to the Gaelic language. The Small Landholders (Scotland) Act 1911 enables Gaelic to be used in the Scottish Land Court, while the Crofters (Scotland) Act 1993 requires one member of the Crofters Commission to be a Gaelic speaker. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980 obliges local authorities to provide the teaching of Gaelic in Gaelic-speaking areas, while the Grants for Gaelic Language Education (Scotland) Regulations 1986 offers grants specifically for Gaelic education. Of further importance for the

maintenance of Gaelic are the National Heritage (Scotland) Act 1985 and the Broadcasting Acts of 1990 and 1996. While the former authorises financial support for organisations involved in the promotion of the Gaelic language and culture, the Broadcasting Acts legally oblige on the Secretary of State for Scotland to make payments to a Gaelic broadcasting fund (Johnston 2002: 8-9).

Since Comunn na Gàidhlig launched its Secure Status Campaign in 1997, several steps have been taken to improve the legal position of Gaelic and the rights of its speakers. In 1999, provisions were made for the use of Gaelic in parliamentary debates in the newly established Scottish Parliament (BBC news: 2.3.2000). Furthermore, the UK government in 2001 ratified the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages with respect to Welsh in Wales, Scottish in Scotland and Irish in Northern Ireland. The Charter commits the Scottish Government to apply 39 out of 65 specific measures to maintain and promote Gaelic. While these measures do not exceed the regulations already in force in Scotland, the importance of the Charter is that it grants Gaelic speakers the right to complain if the state does not meet its obligations (Ó Riagáin 2002). A further measure to improve the position of Gaelic was the establishment of Bòrd Gàidhlig na h-Alba, the Gaelic Development Agency, in 2002. It coordinates activities to promote Gaelic and the funding of various Gaelic organisations. The Bòrd is a public body appointed by and accountable to Scottish Ministers (Johnston 2002: 6).

Undoubtedly, the most important step towards secure status was the introduction of a Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill in November 2002. The Bill demands that certain public bodies function in accordance with the principle of equal status for Gaelic and English. Furthermore, these bodies should publish, maintain and implement a Gaelic Language Plan that shows "the framework in place for the use of Gaelic and how the basis of equality of the English and Gaelic languages will be achieved" (Johnston 2002: 10). Members of the public have the right to complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, if they believe they "have sustained an injustice or hardship in consequence of the action or inaction of a public body" (Johnston 2002: 10). The Bill was warmly welcomed by all major Gaelic organisations and won the backing from both the Scottish Parliament's education and cultural committee (BBC news 28.2.2003). Despite this support, the Scottish Government remained rather critical of financial and technical uncertainties as well as the future role and functions of Bòrd Gàidhlig na h-Alba (Johnston 2002: 15). In March 2003, the Bill received unanimous support

in the Scottish Parliament, but could not complete its passage through Parliament before the election of the new Parliament in May 2003 (BBC news 6.3.2003).

Even though the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Bill failed to become law before the 2003 elections, its introduction to Parliament was not in vain. It helped to place the future of Gaelic on the political agenda and to make it a significant issue in the parliamentary elections. During their election campaigns, the main political parties of Scotland committed themselves to backing legislation that would give the language secure status in the following session of Parliament (O'Henley 2003). In October 2003, Scotland's First Minister promised the introduction of a new Gaelic Bill in Summer 2004 (BBC news 10.10.2003). The Bill aims to give Gaelic a legal status, will put the new Bòrd Gàidhlig na h-Alba on a statutory footing and will require all public organisations to consider the need for a Gaelic language plan for their services. Although the exact content of the Bill has not yet been unveiled, criticisms have already been raised. It is feared that the new Bill will be largely symbolic and will fail to give parents the important right to a Gaelic education for their children (BBC news 11.10.2003).

Even without a Gaelic Language Bill, the Scottish Government can support Gaelic by funding various projects in the areas of education, broadcasting and culture. In the 2002-03 period, a total of £13.4m in public funding for Gaelic was earmarked as follows: £3.3m to support a wide range of Gaelic school projects, £8.5m for the Gaelic Broadcasting Fund, and £1.6m for the support of various Gaelic organisations and cultural activities (Johnston 2002: 5). Comparing these figures with the executive spending on Gaelic ten or twenty years ago, it is clear that the current Scottish government is not indifferent towards the fate of Gaelic. While around £100,000 was used to promote the Gaelic language and culture in 1982-83, this amount had increased eleven times to £11.6m by 1992-93, and since then has risen slightly but steadily (SEP 8.9.2000).

### **3.6 EDUCATION**

The bilingual policy of the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, introduced in 1975, greatly helped to strengthen the use of Gaelic in education. Up to this point, Gaelic had not been given formal recognition as a medium of instruction and was only available as a subject in both primary and secondary schools. In the late 1970s, the first bilingual teaching projects were launched and gradually both teachers and parents became accustomed to Gaelic as a medium of instruction. By 1985, the time was ripe for the establishment of the first two designated Gaelic-medium education units (MacNeil 1994: 246). Since then acceptance of

Gaelic as a medium of instruction has steadily increased and with it the number of Gaelic-medium education units. In 1994, Gaelic-medium education was extended to secondary schools – an important step forward in strengthening the position of Gaelic in education.

Gaelic-medium education units and pupils 1993-2002:

		93/94	94/95	95/96	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02
Nursery	units	3	3	3	3	10	25	33	34	36
	pupils	54	74	66	59	134	221	276	413	403
Primary	units	45	47	50	52	55	56	59	60	59
	pupils	1080	1258	1456	1587	1736	1816	1831	1862	1859
Secondary	units	0	9	10	9	12	14	13	14	14
	pupils	0	129	132	180	231	235	232	326	302

(Source: <http://www.cnag.org.uk/stats.htm>)

By 2002, the number of pupils in Gaelic-medium primary units had increased to 1,859 and the number of units to 59. 403 pupils were enrolled in Gaelic pre-school education and 302 in Gaelic-medium secondary units. Since its establishment in 1985, Gaelic-medium education has known a long period of successful expansion evidenced in rising number of units and pupils, as well as the growing demand for teachers and teaching material. However, the total number of pupils in Gaelic-medium nursery, primary as well as secondary units has decreased for the first time ever between 2000/01 and 2001/02. The first signs that Gaelic-medium education may not continue to grow forever came from the Western Isles, where the number of pupils in Gaelic-medium primary units has fallen steadily since 1998.

Pupils in Gaelic-medium education (GME) in the Western Isles 1986-2003:

School Year	in GME	non-GME	Total on roll	GME as % total
1986-87	4	3,006	3,010	0.13
1988-89	20	2,776	2,796	0.72
1990-91	107	2,669	2,776	3.85
1992-93	271	2,373	2,644	10.24
1994-95	467	2,151	2,618	17.84
1996-97	665	1,896	2,561	25.97
1998-99	643	1,806	2,449	26.26
2000-01	589	1,700	2,289	25.73
2002-03	542	1,631	2,173	24.94

(Source: MacKinnon 2003a)

The number of pupils in the Western Isles' Gaelic-medium primary units has markedly fallen from 665 in 1997 to 542 in 2003. One reason for this may lie in the ever-declining number of schoolchildren in the Western Isles. However, the proportion of pupils in Gaelic-

medium education too has been falling since 2000, a sign that new ideas are needed to promote it. Today, instruction in Gaelic only reaches 25% of primary pupils in the Western Isles, an insufficient proportion to guarantee a secure future for the language. Instead, a further decline of Gaelic in the Western Isles is to be expected, as 25% of fluent Gaelic speakers from the younger generation are not enough to keep the percentage of Gaelic speakers at 59.3%. Although it is likely that more than 25% of all schoolchildren in the Western Isles have some knowledge of Gaelic, it is very doubtful if those in English-medium education will continue to speak Gaelic in the future.

The introduction of Gaelic-medium education has never been a project restricted to the traditional heartlands of the language. The first Gaelic-medium unit opened in Glasgow, and there are now Gaelic-medium units in each of the three major Scottish cities – Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Glasgow even has the first all-Gaelic school. It opened in 1999 and has expanded from 90 pupils to 200 in just four years (BBC news: 13.2.2003). A further sign that Gaelic-medium education is truly national in character is the fact that the majority of parents who send their children to Gaelic-medium units in the Lowlands do not speak the language themselves (Grant 1996: 155). As many pupils in Gaelic-medium education come from a non-Gaelic-speaking background, the first and second years of primary education focus on language development, and more specifically on improving the children's communication skills. Gaelic is exclusively used during the first two years of schooling. After this initial stage, the use of Gaelic begins to vary. Some Gaelic-medium units begin with a gradual introduction of English as a teaching medium for some subjects, whereas others continue with the Gaelic immersion phase. The extent to which Gaelic is present in the school and the community often dictates what model is used (MacNeil 1994: 247-249).

The Scottish Education Department provides the necessary financial support for Gaelic-medium education through specific grants for Gaelic. It covers up to 75% of the costs of approved projects in the education sector. The Education Department also funds Gaelic-medium teacher training places. In doing so, the Education Department hopes to reduce the acute teacher shortage in Gaelic-medium education. It is estimated that around 110 Gaelic-medium primary teachers will be required over the next seven years, as well as around 40 Gaelic-medium secondary teachers (ICSP 2001: 3-4).

Apart from Gaelic as a medium of instruction, the language is also a subject in schools, particularly on the Western Isles. Bogenschneider and MacKay (1996: 250) explain the position of Gaelic in the education system of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar as follows:

The curriculum of the Western Isles [...] has distinctive features relevant to the locality. All pupils study Gaelic, in addition to English and French, in the first two years of secondary education. In the following two years (S3 and S4) pupils are required to study either Gaelic, French or German and some schools afford pupils the opportunity of studying two languages. Pupils follow either the “*Gaidhlig*” course (if Gaelic is the language of their homes or if they have attended Gaelic medium classes during their primary years) or the Gaelic Learners' Course.

In 2002, 928 pupils studied Gaelic in the 'Gaidhlig' course and 2,131 were enrolled in Gaelic learners' classes in the Western Isles (<http://www.cnag.org.uk/stats.htm>).

In higher education, Gaelic is offered at the Universities of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow, where Celtic departments offer Gaelic language and culture courses. Of particular importance is Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the Gaelic College on the Isle of Skye. It offers Gaelic teacher training programmes as well as courses on Gaelic language and culture, Gaelic media and Gaelic communication (<http://smo.uhi.ac.uk>). Sabhal Mòr Ostaig is part of the UHI Millennium Institute, a partnership of fifteen colleges and research institutions located in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Over 5,500 students are currently registered at UHI which plans to establish a University of the Highlands and Islands in the year 2007 (<http://www.uhi.ac.uk/>).

### **3.7 MEDIA**

One area in which Gaelic language activists have made considerable progress in recent years is the media. Since 1990, a Gaelic Broadcasting Fund has secured the broadcasting of a wide range of television programmes in Gaelic. In 1996, the scope of the Gaelic Broadcasting Fund was extended to cover radio programmes. All television and radio companies have access to the fund which is administered by the Gaelic Broadcasting Committee (SEP 8.9.2000). In the financial year 2001/02, the Committee was able to fund 159 hours of television and 20 hours of radio programmes (<http://www.ccg.org.uk/press/03/06/htm>). An additional 100 hours of Gaelic programmes are provided by BBC Scotland, Scottish Television, and Grampian Television at their own expense (SEP 8.9.2000).

A week's schedule of Gaelic television includes news programmes, children's programmes, a teenage variety show, a travel programme, a current affairs debate programme, a church service, a soap opera and an adult variety show. Gaelic programmes are scheduled outside prime time, in the early morning and early afternoon, except for a regular programme on Thursday evening (Lamb 2001: 15). In 2002, airtime for the BBC Gaelic radio service, Radio nan Gaidheal, was increased to nine hours a day. It offers a similar variety of programmes as English-speaking radio stations (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/alba/radio/history/e1996.shtml>).

Gaelic radio and television programmes generally enjoy high popularity. Media use data from the Gaelic language use survey suggest that Gaelic radio and television programmes are a successful alternative to their English-language equivalents. The following table gives the media exposure of the Gaelic language use survey respondents in percent:

Hours per day	Radio		Television	
	Gaelic	English	Gaelic	English
0	32.0%	28.0%	28.7%	11.3%
1	36.3%	27.0%	51.0%	21.3%
2	14.0%	19.7%	6.0%	20.7%
2+	17.7%	25.3%	14.3%	46.7%

(<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/el/el.html>)

Unsurprisingly, people who watch television for two or more hours per day prefer English-language programmes. With only around 260 hours of Gaelic television programmes produced per year, it is simply not possible to watch Gaelic television for two hours a day without watching many repeats. The proportion of those who watch Gaelic television programmes for one hour or more a day, 71.3%, certainly justifies the funding of Gaelic television. Audiences of 300,000 on ITV and 140,000 on BBC2 are further proof of the high popularity of Gaelic television (<http://www.ccg.org.uk/press/03/22.htm>). Thanks to English subtitling, Gaelic television programmes are able to attract many non-Gaelic speakers and to raise awareness of Gaelic-related issues across Scotland (<http://www.uoc.es/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/i1/i1.html>).

Gaelic television enjoys strong support in the Gaelic-speaking community as well as the Scottish population as a whole. In a representative survey conducted across Scotland, 71% of Gaelic speakers and 60% of all respondents were in favour of a television channel dedicated exclusively to Gaelic programmes. Research also showed that both parents and

children would like more Gaelic children's programmes and that a very high proportion of Gaelic-medium primary teachers uses such programmes in class. Furthermore, many Gaelic learners like to watch Gaelic programmes to improve pronunciation, expand their vocabulary and learn more about the Gaelic culture (SEP 10.10.2000).

While Gaelic radio and television have considerably expanded their services in the last twenty years, the Gaelic publishing sector has remained stagnant. The fact that no direct government grants are given to printed media makes the publishing of Gaelic newspapers very difficult (Cormack 1995: 276). Publishers of Gaelic books receive financial support from Comhairle nan Leabhraichean, the Gaelic Books Council, an organisation funded mainly by the Scottish Arts Council (<http://www.gaelicbooks.net/about.asp>). The Council further supports the publication of *Gairm*, an all-Gaelic cultural magazine that appears four times a year (Cormack 1995: 276).

There is currently no Gaelic daily or weekly newspaper. There is only one monthly newspaper, *An Gàidheal Ùr*, which is published by the West Highland Free Press. The Gaelic learners' organisation *Cli* publishes *Cothrom*, a bilingual quarterly periodical. Both *An Gàidheal Ùr* and *Cothrom* offer a wide range of genres: "reviews; editorials; letters to the editor; short stories; general interest stories, cooking columns; news articles; Gaelic lessons; advertisements; children's corners; employment notices; and so on" (Lamb 2001: 16). Many Scottish newspapers, including the West Highland Free Press, the *Stornoway Gazette*, the *Inverness Courier*, the *Scotsman* and the Highland editions of the *Press and Journal*, feature weekly Gaelic columns (Lamb 2001: 16). Their use of Gaelic is thus rather symbolic and its contribution to language maintenance doubtful. Cormack (1995: 272) argues that such a language display may primarily be "intended to show off the paper's Scottish identity and as such, it is aimed as much (perhaps even more) at non-Gaelic readers as it is at Gaels".

In view of the scant use of Gaelic in newspapers, the results on the use of print media from the Gaelic language use survey come as no surprise:

	Books		Newspapers	
	Gaelic	English	Gaelic	English
Often	12.7%	49.0%	9.7%	76.7%
Sometimes	24.7%	25.3%	16.7%	14.0%
Occasionally	22.0%	13.3%	27.0%	5.7%
Never	40.7%	12.3%	46.7%	3.7%

(<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/el/el.html>)

More than one third of the three hundred respondents have never read a book in Gaelic, and almost half never read a Gaelic newspaper. At the same time, approximately one out of ten never reads an English-language book and one out of 30 never reads an English-language newspaper. The high use of English-language print media shows that there is a general interest in books and newspapers among Gaelic speakers. This great disparity between the Gaels' use of Gaelic and English-language print media suggests that the limited availability of Gaelic books and newspapers cannot be the only reason for the alarming results. Rather, it appears that many Gaels simply do not feel confident enough to read Gaelic. As shown above, 25% of the respondents reported only a limited ability to read Gaelic.

To give those who would like to read in Gaelic a chance to do so, the Internet offers an alternative. To date, Sgileog is the only Gaelic publication that is available in its entirety on the Internet. It is a magazine for teenagers which offers various opinion pages, competitions, games and quiz pages ([www.sgileog.com](http://www.sgileog.com)). Sgileog may be the only Gaelic website that does not offer an English-language version. Instead it uses Gaelic as a sort of secret language – a fact that may make the reading of Gaelic more attractive.

### **3.8 LANGUAGE ATTITUDES**

Gaelic has long been a stigmatised language with no place in public life. Its introduction as a subject in schools progressed very slowly, even after the teaching of Gaelic in Gaelic-speaking areas was legalised in 1918. As late as the 1940s, it was common to mark out children caught speaking Gaelic in school by the 'maide crochaidh', a stick that was hung round their necks (Grant 1996: 152). Although such practices are long gone, Gaelic may still suffer from a lack of prestige in some areas of Scottish society. As recently as 1989, Clarkson reported "a strong tendency among working-class parents (the great majority) to discourage their children from using Gaelic" (1989: 164). Answers to the Gaelic language use survey of 1995 show that these attitudes toward Gaelic may finally be dying out among the Gaels. While 230, or 76.7%, of the respondents agree that it is essential for children in the Highlands and Islands to learn Gaelic, only 31, or 10%, disagree with this view. Furthermore, as few as 19 out of 300 agree that one may be considered lower class if one speaks Gaelic and even fewer (7) believe that "Gaelic has no place in the modern world" (<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/el/el.html>). While these answers suggest that Gaelic is currently enjoying some prestige among its speakers, other answers show a more

differentiated picture. As soon as the respondents were asked to compare Gaelic to other languages, doubts about the utility of Gaelic arose. 135, or almost half of all respondents, agreed that there were more valuable languages to learn than Gaelic, while only 104 disagreed with this view. As to identity, most respondents identified themselves more strongly with the region where they came from than with their language. 180 considered themselves to be Islanders and 104 Highlanders, while only 181 identified themselves as Gaels (<http://www.uoc.edu/euromosaic/web/document/gaelic/an/el/el.html>).

While the results of the Gaelic language use survey suggest that the prestige of Gaelic has steadily improved in the eyes of its speakers, there are also signs that the Scottish population as a whole has become more favourable toward Gaelic. The establishment of the Gaelic learners' association Cli in 1984, as well as the fact that the majority of children in Gaelic-medium units outside the Gaidhealtachd have non-Gaelic-speaking parents are evidence of a new interest in the language. Results of the latest Scotland-wide research on attitudes to Gaelic confirm this impression. In August 2003, 66% of the Scottish population believed that "Gaelic is an important part of Scottish life which needs to be promoted" (BBC news: 2.10.2003). An even higher proportion, 87%, agreed that Gaelic-medium education should be available where there is demand. According to Bòrd Gàidhlig na h-Alba, these results are not only extremely encouraging for all Gaelic organisations, but are also highly significant in view of the preparation for the Gaelic Language Bill (BBC news: 2.10.2003).

Though these results suggest that attitudes are strongly favourable toward Gaelic in theory, they do not say a great deal about the willingness of the Scottish population to learn or maintain the language. A survey among parents of pre-school children in the Western Isles has shown that even in the Gaelic-speaking heartland a great disparity exists between attitudes towards Gaelic-English bilingualism and the readiness to realise it. Although in 1989, 86% of parents with pre-school children wanted them to be bilingual, the percentage of pupils in Gaelic-medium education in the Western Isles has never exceeded 26% (Roberts 1991: 262). This shows that doubts about the usefulness of Gaelic-medium education are still very common and that more effort is needed to promote this new school system.

## **4 THE CURRENT SITUATION OF ROMANSH**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION: THE ROMANSH LANGUAGE AND ITS HISTORY**

Romansh is a Romance (or Neo-Latin) language spoken in the Swiss Canton of Graubünden. Together with Friulian and Dolomitic Ladin it forms the Rhaeto-Romance branch of the Romance language family. Whether the grouping together of these three languages is correct was subject to much debate in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the First World War, a number of Italian linguists tried to prove that the Rhaeto-Romance languages could be regarded as North Italian dialects, a thesis that was rejected as one-sided by Swiss Romanists. Today, on the grounds of their separate history, it is mostly agreed that Romansh, Friulian and Dolomitic Ladin should be regarded as three separate languages in spite of their similarities with Italian (Gross et al. 1996: 13).

The Rhaeto-Romance languages came into being when the Romans settled in the Alps and Vulgar Latin spread and combined with the pre-Roman languages of the area. Around 300 A.D., the conquered Alpine region was divided into two alpine provinces: Raetia Prima and Raetia Secunda. Curia Raetorum (present-day Chur) became the capital of Raetia Prima, a province that encompassed Eastern Switzerland, parts of Central Switzerland, Vorarlberg and the neighbouring portion of Tyrol, as well as the Venosta Valley. The Bavarian and Swabian Uplands as well as the northern parts of Tyrol became Raetia Secunda. By the 6<sup>th</sup> century, both provinces were Romanised and Christianised. However, no sooner had the pre-Roman languages been replaced in the two provinces than a new language arrived: a great number of Germanic settlers began to stream into the area from the North as a result of the fall of the Roman Empire. The decline of the Rhaeto-Romance languages had begun (Gross et al. 1996: 15).

By the 10<sup>th</sup> century, German-speaking settlers advancing southward had divided the Rhaeto-Romance-speaking area into three linguistic islands: Romansh, Dolomitic Ladin and Friulian. At the same time, the territory came under the rule of the German Emperor and Alemannic vassals took over power. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, German-speaking settlers from the Valais began to colonise some of the higher Graubünden valleys, so much so that the German language threatened even the heartland of the Romansh-speaking territory. A major blow to the stability of the Romansh community was the great fire of 1464 which destroyed Chur. A large number of German-speaking tradesmen flooded into Chur to work on its reconstruction,

eventually settling there. Subsequently, the Romansh speakers in Chur became a minority and the Romansh language lost its linguistic and cultural centre (Gross et al. 1996: 15-16).

During the Middle Ages, Romansh remained a predominantly spoken language. When, in 1471, the territory of Graubünden was unified to form the 'free state of the three leagues', the new state regarded German exclusively as its official language, despite the fact that the majority of the population spoke Romansh and a considerable minority Italian. It was only in 1794, when the 'free state of the three leagues' was proclaimed to be trilingual. Since 1880, the cantonal constitution of Graubünden recognises German, Romansh and Italian as its official languages. The end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw an increase in the production of Romansh literature and rising general awareness of language-related issues. Several organisations to promote the Romansh language and culture were set up. In 1919, the Lia Rumantscha was established as an umbrella organisation for all associations dealing with Romansh. In 1938, Romansh was recognised as a Swiss national language, and since 1996 it is a partly official language of Switzerland (Gross et al. 1996: 16-17).

Traditionally, the Romansh language is written in a variety of idioms: Puter (Upper Engadine), Vallader (Lower Engadine), Sursilvan (Rein Anteriur), Sutsilvan (Rein Posterieur) and Surmeiran (Surmeir/Oberhalbstein and Albula Valley). Each idiom is taught as the standard variety in the primary schools of its respective territory. Apart from their regional idiom, every Romansh also speaks the dialect of his/her village which can differ from the written idiom. Furthermore, all Romansh people are proficient in Swiss German/German. When meeting a Romansh from another dialectal area, Romansh speakers often use Swiss German as a lingua franca (Liver 2000: 219). Thanks to an increase in Romansh radio broadcasts, the various dialects have become better known and accepted throughout the Romansh-speaking territory.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, several attempts were made to create and promote a standardised version of Romansh, but none made much headway. In 1982, the Lia Rumantscha asked the Zurich Romanist, Heinrich Schmid to develop a concept for the creation of a new pan-Romansh written language, Rumantsch Grischun. The guidelines he presented immediately convinced the experts: Rumantsch Grischun should be a compromise language, based on the written idioms of the two largest linguistic groups: Sursilvan and Vallader. Where the two idioms differ (in spelling, grammar or vocabulary), a third variety,

Surmeiran, should be consulted. Schmid and the Lia Rumantscha agreed that the new language should not become a substitute for the existing idioms. It should be a medium for communicating with the Romansh community as a whole and therefore facilitate the use of Romansh in the administration, institutions and the private sector of the economy. Since the publication of the Rumantsch Grischun dictionary 'pledari grond' in 1993, the language has gained greater acceptance and is more widely used (Diekmann 1996: 372-374). According to a representative survey carried out in 1995, 66% of the Romansh speakers living in Graubünden would like to have a standardised written language. The largest proportion, 44%, wished to introduce Rumantsch Grischun, and 22% one of the five idioms as the standard written variety. Using the results of this survey as a basis, the government of Graubünden established a plan for the introduction of the language in various domains. Since 1996, the canton of Graubünden uses Rumantsch Grischun to communicate with the Romansh-speaking population (Gross et al. 1996: 61-62). Furthermore, it has decided that as of 2010, pupils in all Romansh-medium primary schools will be taught to write Rumantsch Grischun (La Quotidiana: 24.11.2003).

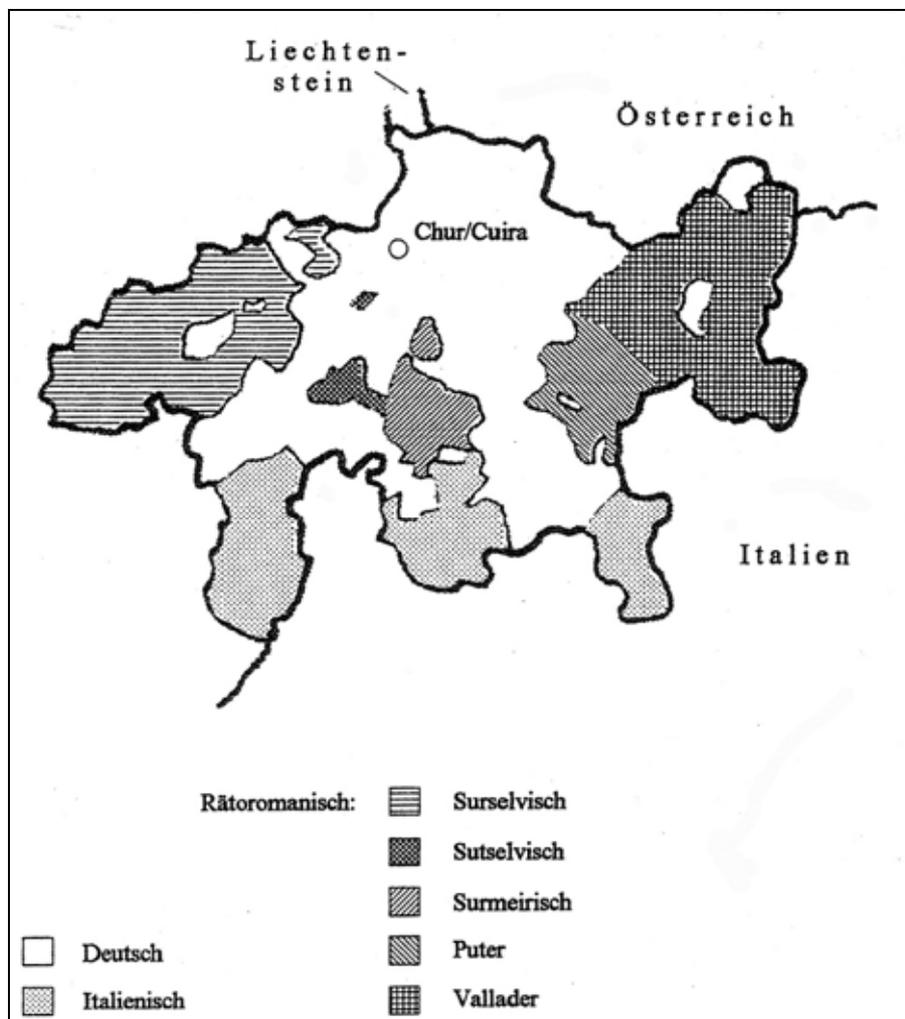
#### **4.2 GLOBALISATION AND MOBILITY**

The building of roads and railways in the 19<sup>th</sup> century greatly facilitated access to the Romansh-speaking area. Subsequently, individual mobility has increased and the lives of many Romansh people have changed. A great number of Romansh speakers left their homeland to work in the industrial and administrative centres of German-speaking Switzerland. At the same time, the tourist trade became economically more important to the Romansh community and attracted many German speakers to the area. The influx of Swiss Germans and the emigration of many Romansh speakers led to the Germanisation of many regional centres (Gross et al. 1996: 25-27).

To date, the migration of Romansh speakers to the economic centres of German-speaking Switzerland continues. Many young people are forced to leave the Romansh-speaking area for lack of higher education facilities. Furthermore, many Romansh speakers are moving to popular tourist locations within the traditionally Romansh area. As a result of these migration processes, many Romansh-speaking villages have lost inhabitants and have seen the share of the elderly population rise. While the population of Graubünden as a whole grew by 28.4% between 1941 and 1980, most of the traditional Romansh-speaking territory lost inhabitants. Between 1970 and 1980, for instance, two thirds of all Romansh-speaking

villages had lost inhabitants. Only the villages of the Upper Engadine and some other popular tourist destinations had gained inhabitants, albeit mostly German-speaking ones (Diekmann 1996: 347-348). As long as the migration of German speakers to the traditional Romansh area continues, the number of villages where Romansh speakers are in the majority will continue to fall. Between 1970 and 2000, no fewer than 18 villages lost their Romansh-speaking majority. Even whole valleys, such as the Upper Engadine, lost its Romansh majority. Today, only one village (S-chanf) out of eleven is still predominantly Romansh-speaking (BFS 2002).

#### 4.3 DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS



Distribution of Graubünden's three languages according to the dominant mother tongue (1980 census). (Source: Holzer, W. & Pröll, U. 1994: 348).

Although Graubünden's cantonal constitution recognises German, Romansh and Italian as cantonal languages, there is no document that officially defines the territory of each one. Nevertheless, it is common to speak of the 'traditional Romansh territory', a term that refers to

the 121 villages that had a Romansh-speaking majority in at least one of the censuses carried out between 1860 and 1888 (Furer 1996: 35). This traditional Romansh area includes the Surselva in the West, parts of the Sutselva (Hinterrhein), Surmeir (Oberhalbstein) and the Albula valley in the centre of the canton, as well as the Upper and Lower Engadine and the Val Müstair in the East (see map). During the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the area where a majority of the population speaks Romansh has dramatically shrunk. Today, it no longer forms a connected whole. This is borne out by the progressively falling number of truly Romansh-speaking villages.

Distribution of Graubünden's 213 municipalities according to the dominant language: 1860-2000:

Majority	1860	1880	1900	1920	1930	1941	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Romansh	120	116	109	107	103	103	98	90	85	77	72	67
Italian	23	24	28	24	25	25	25	29	25	25	24	24
German	70	73	76	82	85	85	90	94	103	111	117	122

(Source: Lechmann 1998: 11; Furer 1999: 40 and BFS 2002)

While the territory of Graubünden's other minority language, Italian, remained relatively stable over the last 140 years, the Romansh community has continually lost municipalities to the German-speaking majority. Today, the number of Romansh villages is only around half that in 1860. An additional cause for concern is the fact that the shrinking Romansh territory accelerated in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While 'only' 11 municipalities lost their Romansh-speaking majority between 1990 and 1950, no less than 31 did so between 1950 and 2000. Even in the 67 villages with a Romansh-speaking majority, the language is not as omnipresent as the German, French or Italian languages in their territories. Only 68.9% of the population of those villages mentioned Romansh as their best-known language in the 2000 census. Furthermore, the 67 Romansh-speaking villages are among the smallest in the canton. An analysis of the 1980 census data showed that the number of inhabitants of a municipality and its percentage of Romansh speakers usually are in inverse proportion: the bigger the village the smaller its proportion of Romansh speakers (Diekmann 1996: 348).

The language shift in traditional Romansh communities is reflected in the continually smaller proportion of Romansh speakers in the canton of Graubünden. The table below shows the distribution of Graubünden's population according to language between 1880-2000.

	Graubünden	Romansh	Romansh in %	Italian in %	German in %	Other languages in %
1880	94,991	37,794	39.79%	13.66%	45.97%	0.59%
1900	104,520	36,472	34.89%	16.78%	46.65%	1.67%
1920	119,854	39,127	32.65%	14.75%	51.21%	1.40%
1941	128,247	40,187	31.34%	12.82%	54.91%	0.94%
1960	147,458	38,414	26.05%	16.06%	56.66%	1.23%
1980	164,641	36,017	21.88%	13.48%	59.92%	4.73%
1990	173,890	29,679	17.07%	11.04%	65.33%	6.56%
2000	187,058	27,038	14.5%	10.2%	68.3%	7%

(Source: Furer 1999: 72 and BFS 2003)

While the Romansh-speaking share of Graubünden was almost as big as the German-speaking one in 1880, it subsequently sank so drastically that it is now nearing that of the Italian-speaking community. When interpreting the above table, it is important to note that the language question in the national census changed in 1990. Up to 1980, the census asked for the mother tongue. Since 1990, it asks the respondent for the language he/she thinks in and knows best, as well as for the language(s) he/she regularly speaks at school/work and at home/with the family. The 1990/2000 figures relate to the best-known language. Had the data of the regularly spoken language(s) been included in the above table, the decline of Romansh would look somewhat less drastic: in 2000, 40,257 inhabitants of Graubünden (= 21.5% of the population) either indicated Romansh as their best known or regularly spoken language (BFS 2003).

As the table below shows, the Romansh-speaking proportion of Switzerland too has continually fallen over the last 120 years:

Census	Population of Switzerland	Development in %	Romansh- speakers	in %	development in %
1880	2,846,102	100.0	38,705	1.36	100.0
1888	2,917,754	102.5	38,357	1.31	99.1
1900	3,315,443	116.5	38,651	1.17	99.9
1910	3,753,293	131.9	40,234	1.07	104.0
1920	3,880,320	136.3	43,038	1.10	111.2
1930	4,006,400	142.9	44,158	1.09	114.1
1941	4,265,703	149.9	46,456	1.09	120.0
1950	4,714,992	165.7	48,862	1.04	126.2
1960	5,429,061	190.8	49,823	0.92	128.7
1970	6,269,783	220.3	50,339	0.80	130.1
1980	6,365,960	223.7	51,128	0.80	132.1
1990	6,873,687	241.5	39,632	0.58	102.4
2000	7,288,010	256.1	35,072	0.48	90.6

(Source: Lechmann 1998: 8 and BFS 2002)

Although the actual figures of Romansh speakers slightly increased over the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the percentage of Romansh speakers steadily fell until 1980, since when it has remained stable at 0.80%. Again it needs to be said that the figures of 1990 and 2000 cannot directly be compared to those from earlier years, as they give the number of speakers of 'Romansh as best known language'. However, the continuation of Romansh's decline cannot be disputed. If one takes the figures for 'Romansh as best known or regularly spoken language', the situation of Romansh looks slightly better: 66,356 or 0.97% of Switzerland's inhabitants mentioned Romansh at least once in the census in 1990 and 0.83% or 60,816 in 2000 – there was still therefore a clear decline between 1990 and 2000 (BFS 2003).

For an adequate estimation of the size of the Romansh community, it is important to take into account the figure of "Romansh as regularly spoken language". In an open letter to the Swiss Government, the Lia Rumantscha insists that a question on the best-known language is not adequate for measuring the size of a truly bilingual community. It stresses that it is a necessity for all Romansh speakers to be proficient in German, as most further and higher education facilities are not available in Romansh. For this reason, many Romansh speakers would indicate German as their best-known language. The Lia Rumantscha strongly criticises the fact that only the 2000 figure for Romansh as best known language has been published. This gives the impression that the Romansh community is smaller than it actually is (<http://www.liarumantscha.ch/de/actualitads/cp15012003.html>).

As mentioned above, an important reason for the decline of the Romansh language is the migration process into and out of the traditional Romansh-speaking territory. The city of Chur, for instance, has long been the 'biggest Romansh-speaking village'. In 2000, 3,336 of its inhabitants reported Romansh as their best known or regularly spoken language. Today, only around a third (22,000) of all Romansh speakers still lives in one of the villages where a majority of the population speaks the language. No less than half of all speakers (33,596) live outside the traditional Romansh territory, while around a sixth (10,760) lives in the currently German-dominated Romansh area (Furer 1996: 157). The expansion of the German language into the traditional Romansh territory is so far advanced that three of the five Romansh idioms are under severe threat. As the table below shows, only Vallader and Sursilvan (apart from the five municipalities near Chur that form the Plaun region) are still in the majority in their traditional territory.

Density of Romansh speakers in the traditional Romansh territory in 1990:

Region	Best known or regularly spoken language	Best known language
Sursilvan (Surselva)	81.5%	71.9%
Sursilvan (Plaun)	27.7%	14.2%
Sutsilvan	20.3%	12.0%
Surmiran	52.1%	39.2%
Puter	33.9%	17.6%
Vallader	81.3%	67.6%
Total	51.4%	38.8%

(Source: Furer 1996: 94)

Besides the impact of increased mobility, the Romansh-speaking population also suffers from a lack of young people. In the villages where Romansh is in the majority, the percentage of Romansh speakers (best known or regularly spoken) is smallest in the 25-29 age group. In villages that lost their Romansh-speaking majority, it is again the 25-29 age group that has the smallest percentage of Romansh speakers. These villages further suffer from a lack of Romansh-speaking children. Fortunately, this is not the case for the truly Romansh-speaking municipalities, where Romansh-medium primary education helps to maintain Romansh among the children: 95.8% of 10-14 years old regularly speak the language in those villages (Furer 1996: 158-159).

#### **4.4 THE SPEECH COMMUNITY AND ITS COMMITMENT TO THE LANGUAGE**

As the number of Romansh speakers has steadily declined, so has the use of the language within the family (and community). While 55,707 persons reported Romansh as the language regularly spoken in the family in 1990 (Furer 1996: 192), the number had fallen to 49,134 in 2000. Almost one third (15,427) live outside Graubünden and around two thirds (33,707) in the canton (BFS 2003). It is important to stress that these figures include both people reporting Romansh as the sole family language and those reporting it alongside another language. It is clear that those families indicating Romansh together with another language will be much more likely to give up the language in the future. Furthermore, the difficulty to maintain the language is much greater for those families living in an area where there is no support from a Romansh-speaking neighbourhood or a Romansh-medium primary school. For a better analysis of the Romansh speech community it is therefore important to divide the Romansh speakers into several subgroups: those living in a municipality where a majority mentions Romansh as the best known language (area R1), those living in the traditional Romansh area where the language has become a minority (area R2) and those living outside the traditional Romansh territory (area R3). The table below analyses the situation of Romansh as a family language in R1.

## Romansh as family language of children living with both parents in R1

Family language		Total children	Romansh as family language			Romansh absent
of mother	of father		without German	with German	Total	
Romansh	Romansh	5478	80.3%	18.5%	98.8%	1.2%
Romansh	German	276	22.1%	58.0%	80.1%	19.9%
German	Romansh	606	10.4%	69.0%	79.4%	20.6%
German	German	574	2.4%	16.6%	19.0%	81.0%

adapted from (Furer 1996: 203)

The overwhelming majority of children growing up in R1 regularly speak Romansh in the family. Even 20% of families in which both parents are German-speaking indicate the regular use of Romansh. This is a sign that the Romansh-speaking neighbourhood and the partly Romansh-medium primary schools may help to assimilate the children of newcomers. Nevertheless, the use of German in R1 is rather widespread. Especially alarming is the fact that 20% of families with two Romansh-speaking parents regularly speak German, although these families are in the ideal situation to maintain a purely Romansh-speaking household. Even in those families, the position of the language is no longer unchallenged. As the tables below show, without the support of a predominantly Romansh-speaking community only a minority of the families with two Romansh-speaking parents is able to maintain a purely Romansh-speaking home.

## Romansh as family language of children living with both parents in R2

Family language		Total children	Romansh as family language			Romansh absent
of mother	of father		without German	with German	Total	
Romansh	Romansh	1620	39.5%	48.8%	88.3%	11.7%
Romansh	German	540	3.7%	48.5%	52.2%	47.8%
German	Romansh	894	1.5%	35.9%	37.4%	62.6%
German	German	3035	0.3%	3.5%	3.7%	96.3%

adapted from (Furer 1996: 211)

## Romansh as family language of children living outside the traditional Romansh area (R3):

Family language		Total children	Romansh as family language			Romansh absent
of mother	of father		without German	with German	total	
Romansh	Romansh	2351	24.0%	40.7%	64.7%	35.3%
Romansh	German	4512	1.1%	13.6%	14.7%	85.3%
Romansh	Other	612	11.4%	4.7%	16.2%	83.8%
German	Romansh	3587	0.2%	5.9%	6.1%	93.9%
Other	Romansh	477	5.9%	1.0%	6.9%	93.1%

adapted from (Furer 1996: 218)

Although the majority of couples cannot maintain Romansh as the only family language beyond R1, there is nevertheless a considerable number that can. 39.5% in R2 and 24% in R3 of those families with two Romansh-speaking parents live according to the watchword of the Romansh language activists: 'denter Romontschs mo romontsch' (between Romansh speakers only Romansh). Unsurprisingly, families of two Romansh-speaking parents in general are least at risk of abandoning Romansh as family language, no matter where they live. Romansh speakers married to non-Romansh speakers are a great deal more dependent on the support from a Romansh-speaking community when it comes to transmitting the language to their children. Currently, no less than 50% of all Romansh speakers marry non-Romansh speakers (Bickel 1994: 66-67).

Naturally, the use of Romansh outside the family varies considerably according to the region where a Romansh speaker lives. In R3, it is virtually impossible to use Romansh in public. Nevertheless, no fewer than 5,434 Romansh speakers living outside Graubünden indicate the regular use of Romansh at work or in school (BFS 2003). In R2, the situation is similar to that of R3. Romansh speakers will only speak Romansh outside their families in very restricted situations and only if they know that their interlocutor is speaking the language as well. Even in the Romansh-majority area (R1), the position of Romansh is significantly weaker outside the family than within. The table below summarises the findings of a survey conducted in 1988/89 that investigated language use in predominantly Romansh-speaking municipalities. Situations in which Romansh is least used are given in grey:

	Romansh	Occasionally Romansh	German
with relatives	(86.5%)	(9.5%)	(4.1%)
with neighbours	(78.4%)	(8.1%)	(13.5%)
with friends	(73.0%)	(20.3%)	(6.8%)
with elderly people	(87.8%)	(4.1%)	(8.1%)
with the postman	(79.7%)	(0%)	(20.3%)
with the priest	(70.3%)	(2.7%)	(27.0%)
in shops	(71.6%)	(9.5%)	(18.9%)
at work	(60.8%)	(13.1%)	(25.7%)
in restaurant/at the pub	(68.9%)	(17.6%)	(13.5%)
clubs/societies	(70.3%)	(9.5%)	(20.3%)
with the authorities	(60.8%)	(16.2%)	(23.0%)
at the town hall	(64.9%)	(6.8%)	(28.4%)
at the post-office	(75.7%)	(2.7%)	(21.6%)
in the bank	(73.0%)	(4.1%)	(23.0%)

Adapted from (Fischer: 1995: 20)

The use of Romansh is highest in the more informal situations of talking with relatives, elderly people, neighbours or the postman. With only 60.8% and 64.9% using Romansh with the authorities and at the town hall, it appears that there is a tendency to switch to German in more official situations. The low percentage of Romansh spoken at work may reflect the fact that many Romansh speakers living in R1 work outside the Romansh-majority area. Furthermore, the often cited negative influence of the Church also shows up in this survey: more than one quarter of the respondents indicates the use of German when speaking to the priest. This is due to the fact that several parishes in the Romansh-majority area have German-speaking priests. The church has traditionally been rather quick to abandon Romansh. In 1981/82, there were only 13 Protestant and 17 Catholic municipalities left in Graubünden that predominantly used Romansh in church (Diekmann 1996: 344).

In the past, the different religious denominations have worked as a distancing factor between the two biggest Romansh areas Surselva (mainly Catholic) and Engadine (mainly Protestant). This religious difference and the topographical boundaries between the two regions resulted in both having more contact with German-speaking Switzerland than with each other. Romansh speakers often showed greater loyalty to German than to the other idioms. For instance, it was common practice to favour German-language schoolbooks to those of neighbouring idioms, if no schoolbook in the local idiom was available (Lechmann 1998: 93). Only since the founding of the Lia Rumantscha in 1919 have the Romansh regions had a collective voice and work together to maintain their language.

The Lia Rumantscha is the umbrella organisation for all Romansh associations. It fosters and coordinates the work of regional organisations that promote the Romansh language and culture. It receives federal and cantonal funding for campaigns to promote and maintain Romansh at home, in school, in church and in public life. Its projects to support the Romansh speech community focus on the areas of education, culture, status planning and corpus planning. One of its latest activities has been to call on the Graubünden government to strengthen the use of Romansh in secondary schools by allowing more classes to be taught through the medium of Romansh (<http://www.liarumantscha.ch/de/actualitads/cp19032003.html>). Apart from the Lia Rumantscha's initiatives, the publishing of a 'manifesto on the situation of Romansh' by a group of Romansh speakers in March 2002 also helped to draw attention to the problems of the Romansh community. The manifesto criticises the current autonomy exercised by the municipalities in the choice of their official language, and

calls on the cantonal and federal governments to ensure that Romansh finally receives the status of a fully official language in its traditional territory. Within only two weeks 2,845 people signed the manifesto – a sign that a considerable number of the Romansh population is willing to fight for the maintenance of their language (<http://www.rumantsch.ch/rumol/manifestde.html>).

#### **4.5 THE OFFICIAL STATUS OF THE ROMANSH LANGUAGE AND CULTURE**

In recent years, the federal government has introduced several measures to improve the legal situation of Romansh. In 1995, the Federal Law on Financial Assistance for the Maintenance and Promotion of the Romansh and Italian Language and Culture came into force, which settled details concerning the federal funding of Romansh (and Italian). In 1997, Switzerland ratified the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages which affords the Romansh language and culture international protection. The application of laws and regulations for the maintenance and protection of the Romansh language and culture is now monitored by an independent panel of experts.

Another important step towards a secure legal status for Romansh was made in 1996, when a new article was introduced in the Swiss Constitution. It is only since then that Romansh has been recognised as a partly official language of Switzerland. Contrary to the (full) official languages German, French and Italian, Romansh has official status only "for the purpose of dealings with persons of Romansh mother tongue" (Gross et al. 1996: 33). An act of parliament shall settle the details. According to the first draft, it is intended to give Romansh speakers the right to communicate with the federal authorities in one of the five idioms or Rumantsch Grischun. Written inquiries will be answered in Romansh. In the case of oral communication, the federal government cannot guarantee that communication in all four languages will be always possible. A few federal publications will also be printed in Romansh, such as laws and explanatory documents on legislative proposals. Romansh will neither be a working language of the Swiss Parliament nor of the federal administration. As to the position of the four national languages in education, it is planned to promote the teaching of Italian in the German- and French-speaking parts of Switzerland. No reasons are given why Romansh should not be promoted. Furthermore, 'educational measures' shall be offered to Romansh- and Italian-speaking families living in the diaspora. However, these educational measures shall only be offered if there is sufficient demand (PAS 2001: 23-31).

The 1996 article on languages also contains a paragraph that enables the Confederation to support measures adopted in the Cantons of Graubünden and Ticino to maintain and promote the Romansh and Italian languages. However, the Confederation has no right to initiate its own language maintenance projects. Funding issues are settled by the Federal Law on Financial Assistance for the Maintenance and Promotion of the Romansh and Italian Languages and Cultures. It provides grants to the cantons of Graubünden and Ticino under the condition that they annually submit a written request for financial assistance and contribute at least 25% of the total costs.

Areas which the Confederation is authorised to support are:

- a. general measures to support and promote the Romansh and Italian languages and cultures;
- b. organisations and institutions that actively take charge of supra-regional undertakings to maintain and promote the Romansh and Italian languages and cultures;
- c. the activities of publishing houses in Romansh and Italian-speaking Switzerland (Gross et al. 1996: 36).

In addition to these regulations concerning both Romansh and Italian, the Confederation has the right to support the Romansh language and culture through the funding of the Romansh news agency, Agentura da Novitads Rumantscha (Gross et al. 1996: 36). In recent years, federal grants paid to Graubünden for the maintenance and promotion of the Romansh and Italian languages and cultures amounted to around CHF 5 million. Roughly CHF 1.25 million were earmarked for the Romansh news agency (Gross et al. 1996: 41). The Lia Rumantscha currently receives CHF 2.4 million in federal and cantonal subsidies. An additional CHF 1 million comes from revenues from the sales of books and translation work, as well as from donations from a number of organisations and foundations (La Quotidiana: 27.10.2003).

Due to Swiss federalism, the fate of Romansh largely depends on its legal position in the canton of Graubünden. There, the cantonal constitution recognises Romansh, together with Italian and German as a 'cantonal language', a formulation that has generally been taken to mean 'official language'. The three languages may all be used in parliament, in communication with the authorities and in courts with the exception of the Administrative Court, where only German may be spoken. Judgements of the Cantonal Court are exclusively written in German and will be translated into Italian for parties in the Italian-speaking part of the canton. Romansh is used by the canton for the most important official texts (such as laws and ordinances) as well as in correspondence with Romansh citizens and village authorities.

As to the language of tuition, the cantonal legislation does not specify which languages shall be used. Respecting the principle of subsidiarity, the cantonal legislation leaves it to the municipalities to determine the official language to be used in schools and municipal administrations (Gross et al. 1996: 36-41).

Although the legislation of Graubünden gives Romansh the same status as German (apart from the obvious jurisdictional discrimination), in practice the language is rarely used by the cantonal administration, in parliament or in any public situations outside the traditionally Romansh-speaking municipalities. Romansh speakers will only then chose to communicate in Romansh with the cantonal administration, if they know that the responsible official is a Romansh speaker. If they do not know, they generally prefer to write or speak in German in order not to annoy the official. In parliament too, the use of Romansh is very restricted, for obvious reasons: unlike the other bilingual cantons of Switzerland, Graubünden does not have a simultaneous translation service in parliament. For this reason, German is almost exclusively used, as anyone wishing to win over the German-speaking majority with his/her motion is forced to express their views in this language (Furer 1999: 50-53). Furthermore, a survey conducted by the Lia Rumantscha in 1992 showed that even municipalities with a high proportion of Romansh speakers mainly communicated in German with the cantonal authorities and most information or documents they received were in German (Furer 1999: 61). Therefore, the Lower Engadine and the Val Müstair (including S-chanf and Zuoz in the Upper Engadine) introduced an official language rule in 1995 to strengthen the use of Romansh in the district and in communication with the cantonal authorities. This rule makes the use of Romansh at the cantonal level a mandatory requirement and prohibits individual municipalities from changing their official language (Gross et al. 1996: 31).

#### **4.6 EDUCATION**

Of the 121 municipalities in the traditional Romansh territory, 85 run a Romansh-medium primary school (type A-schools). 16 run a German-medium one with Romansh as a subject (type B-schools) and 18 villages have an all-German school in which Romansh is not taught at all. One municipality (Bivio) has an Italian-medium primary school, and a second (Samedan) has run a bilingual Romansh-German school since 1996. Romansh-medium kindergartens are run in 58 municipalities. In 1990, 5,049 pupils lived in those municipalities running a Romansh-medium primary school (including Samedan) and 2,624 in those offering

a Romansh B-school. These numbers include pupils in primary, secondary as well as higher education (Furer 1996: 224-232).

In Romansh A-schools, tuition is entirely in Romansh during the first three years of primary school. In the fourth year, German is introduced as a subject with 4-6 lessons per week. Some schools have already begun to use it as a medium of instruction while others keep Romansh as the main medium of instruction for the remaining three years of primary school (Furer 1999: 55). Romansh-medium education clearly has a positive influence on language maintenance. In municipalities with an A-school, the percentage of schoolchildren reporting Romansh as their best-known language is at 73.9% the highest among the ten-year-olds, as opposed to 65.4% among the seven-year-olds and 66.4% among the fifteen-year-olds. These figures clearly show a positive influence on Romansh where teaching is in Romansh, but negative when it switches to German (Furer 1996: 228-231). The data on the regularly spoken language in school confirm these findings. While only around one quarter of all pupils indicate the regular use of German (or Swiss German) in school during the first three years of schooling, the proportion jumps to 60% as soon as German is introduced as a subject (Furer 1996: 227). Romansh A-schools have also been proven to give children a high level of proficiency in both Romansh and German. Fifteen-year-olds who have gone through Romansh A-schools did almost as well as their German monolingual control group in a test on their grammatical and cognitive-academic language proficiency in German. Their score was only 7% lower than that of the monolingual German control group. In a similarly structured Romansh test, they scored almost as high as in the German test (Cathomas, R. 1999: 50-51).

B-schools lead to a rather different level of proficiency in the two languages. There, Romansh is only taught as a subject for two lessons per week, which is not enough for pupils to become highly proficient in Romansh, not even for those from a Romansh-speaking family. Furthermore, the level of Romansh language classes differs significantly from one B-school to another. While some schools run two different Romansh classes – one for Romansh-speaking pupils and one for German-speaking ones – others teach both groups in the same class (Cathomas, R. 1999: 45). Therefore, it is not surprising that fifteen-year-olds who have had nine years of Romansh as a subject in B-schools scored significantly lower in the Romansh test than the twelve-year-old A-school pupils (Cathomas, R. 1999: 50).

In secondary schools, Romansh is used as the teaching medium for 2-4 Romansh lessons, 2 biology lessons and occasionally music and art lessons. In total between 10 and 25% of all lessons are currently taught in Romansh. Whether this is enough to develop a high proficiency in the language or whether it would not be better to strengthen the position of Romansh are rather controversial questions among Romansh speakers. Some are against improving the position of Romansh as they believe this may weaken the Romansh pupils' proficiency in German (Cathomas, R. 1999: 45-46). Others, among them surprisingly many young Romansh speakers, are of the opinion that there should be more tuition through Romansh in secondary education. In a large-scale survey of twenty-year-old Romansh speakers conducted in 1987, 67.1% of respondents were in favour of having a Romansh-medium school from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> class, while 80% were in favour of increasing the number of Romansh lessons in school (Cathomas, B. 1994: 359, 354). This wish for more Romansh-medium education is certainly justified. According to UNESCO research, the percentage of lessons taught in a minority language should never be below 30% so as to ensure a high level of proficiency in both the minority and the majority language (Carigiet 98: 48).

Although the position of Romansh has generally not been strengthened in secondary schools, some attempts at least have been made to increase its use in secondary as well as further education. Since 1996, Samedan has run a bilingual Romansh-German school, in which Romansh is also used as a medium of instruction for 50% of all lessons in secondary school. By giving Romansh a stronger position in secondary education, it will be possible to introduce the pupils to various types of specialist vocabulary and thus correct the image of Romansh as a family and children's language (NZZ: 25.09.2000). Another measure that markedly improved the position of Romansh in education was the high school reform of 1998. Previously, Romansh-speaking pupils had the same curriculum as their German-speaking peers. Romansh could only be studied for two extra lessons per week, with the result that many Romansh-speaking pupils preferred the free time to the additional workload. Now, Romansh-speaking pupils can enrol in a bilingual Romansh-German *Matura* ( $\approx$  A-levels/high school diploma) programme, in which Romansh is taught for four lessons per week as a subject and is used as a teaching medium for two more compulsory subjects. Unfortunately, only three of the five high schools in Graubünden have introduced the new bilingual *Matura* programme. The remaining schools (the private high schools of Zuoz and Mustér) are in the heartland of the Romansh-speaking territory and have thus many Romansh-speaking pupils.

In recent years, two additional long-awaited improvements concerning instruction through Romansh have finally been made. Since 1997, all primary pupils in Graubünden must study one of the official cantonal languages as a first foreign language; a measure that is hoped will strengthen the position of Romansh and Italian. Furthermore, it is now possible for the many Romansh speakers living in Chur to send their children to a school that offers some tuition in Romansh. In 2000, the first Romansh-German classes were established, in which half of the curriculum is taught through Rumantsch Grischun. Previously, Romansh could not even be studied as a subject in the capital of the trilingual (Romansh-Italian-German) canton. Although these measures have contributed to a slight improvement in the position of Romansh in schools at the cantonal level, the continuing immigration of German speakers into the traditional Romansh territory threatens its status in schools there. In 2002 alone, two B-schools banned Romansh from their curriculum as a result of pressure from German-speaking newcomers (Bündner Tagblatt: 2.8.2003).

#### **4.7 MEDIA**

Romansh speakers can obtain information on local and regional topics from a variety of Romansh media: books, newspapers, magazines, radio and television programmes. However, as soon as they would like to find out about national and international issues in Romansh, the only option available to them is the news broadcasts on Radio Rumantsch. Apart from regional, national and international news, the state-owned Radio Rumantsch broadcasts a variety of information, entertainment and music programmes. All presenters speak their own idiom or local dialect, as the aim of Radio Rumantsch is to improve mutual understanding among speakers from the various Romansh regions. Radio Rumantsch is currently on air 14 hours a day. However, Radio Rumantsch has not always been in such a comfortable position. As recently as 1983, its airtime amounted to 1.5 hours a day – a rather symbolic gesture (Gross et al. 1996: 48). Since then, the duration of daily Romansh broadcasts has gradually increased. The aim for the near future is to have round-the-clock programming (La Quotidiana: 21.5.2003). In addition to Radio Rumantsch, the two private Graubünden radio stations also broadcast a share, albeit modest, of their programmes in Romansh; they are legally obliged to do so (Gross et al. 1996: 48-49).

In comparison to Romansh radio broadcasts, the amount of time dedicated to Romansh on TV is insignificant. Televisiun Rumantscha has two different programmes broadcast on the Swiss-German TV channel SF1: Telesguard and Cuntrasts. Telesguard is a 7-minute local

news programme which is broadcast from Monday to Friday at 6p.m.. Cuntrasts is a weekly 25-minute information programme on Sunday at 5p.m. (La Quotidiana 10.6.2003). Repeats are shown on both French- and Italian-speaking Swiss TV channels. Furthermore, a bedtime story, the 'Istorgia da buna notg' is broadcast once a week and the religious broadcast 'In pled sin via' four times a year (Gross et al. 1996: 48). With regular daily airtime of only seven minutes, Romansh television obviously cannot be credited with the same importance for language maintenance as Romansh radio. Nevertheless, Televisiun Rumantscha programmes are very popular. In 2002, an average of 54,000 persons watched Cuntrasts, while Telesguard had 174,000 viewers. The latter certainly includes many German speakers with little or no knowledge of Romansh as, according to the research centre of Swiss Television, only around 100,000 people in Switzerland are able to understand Romansh (La Quotidiana 21.5.2003).

While the situation of Romansh in television has only marginally improved in recent years, the situation of Romansh print media has changed significantly for the better. Thanks to the establishment of a Romansh news agency in 1996, the aim of providing a daily Romansh newspaper could finally be achieved in 1997 after years of planning and campaigning. La Quotidiana appears five times a week and has replaced the former regional newspapers of the Engadine, the Surselva and Sutselva regions that came out between once and twice weekly. La Quotidiana contains regional news in all of the five idioms as well as in Rumantsch Grischun (Elmer-Cantieni 1998: 28). Unfortunately, La Quotidiana is still struggling for better acceptance in some parts of the Romansh-speaking territory. In Spring 2003, three journalists lost their jobs due to a lack of funds (PSR 2003). Apart from La Quotidiana, another local weekly newspaper, La Pagina da Surmeir as well as Punts, a monthly magazine for young people, compete for Romansh readers. However, the Romansh reading public is rather small. Many Romansh speakers are not used to reading in Romansh, as most of their schooling was done through German. In 1987, 59.3% of all 20-year-old Romansh speakers preferred to read in German, while only 21% preferred to read in Romansh. As long as this proportion does not markedly increase, the problems of Romansh print media may remain (Cathomas, B. 1994: 358).

#### **4.8 LANGUAGE ATTITUDES**

The Romansh people identify themselves strongly with their language. In a nationwide survey of twenty-year-olds, 78.2% of the Romansh speakers declared that it was important or even very important to them to come from the Romansh-speaking part of Switzerland (as compared to 35.1% of Swiss Germans, 48.5% of the French- and 73.4% of

the Italian speakers). The Romansh speakers generally felt stronger ties to their language territory than to their place or canton of origin (Bickel 1994: 70). Romansh speakers also feel more Romansh than Swiss. In a survey among Romansh speakers living in Graubünden, 36.5% of the respondents saw themselves first and foremost as Romansh, 21.6% as Swiss and 25.7% as both. However, this great affinity with the Romansh language usually does not correlate with an equally high use of the language. On the contrary, those reporting the greatest love for the language were those who rarely spoke Romansh, while those who spoke it frequently, tended to have a rather low opinion of the language (Fischer 1995: 22-23). Romansh is said to have the lowest prestige in the eyes of those Romansh speakers who have never left the Romansh-speaking area. These people often do not like to reveal their Romansh identity and may be over-zealous in demonstrating their knowledge of Swiss German. However, this attitude is no longer very widespread among the younger generations of Romansh speakers (Carigiet 2000: 235).

Traditionally, the Romansh speakers' identity has been closely tied to their idioms. The attachment of some is so deep that they strongly object to the new standardised version, Rumantsch Grischun. In 1991, a group of Sursilvan speakers even sent a petition to the Swiss Government that demanded that further use of Rumantsch Grischun should be prevented (Solèr 1997: 1882). Scepticism towards Rumantsch Grischun is generally rather widespread among the Romansh speakers. In a representative opinion poll conducted by the canton of Graubünden in 1994/95, only 44% of the Romansh speakers were in favour of introducing Rumantsch Grischun as a standardised written language, while 22% preferred to have one of the idioms as a standardised written language, and 35% were against any standardised solution (Gross et al. 1996: 61). The younger generation, however, has fewer reservations with regard to the introduction of Rumantsch Grischun. In the above mentioned nation-wide survey of twenty-year-olds, 53% of 20-year-old respondents reported that Rumantsch Grischun is either a good idea or necessary for the maintenance of the language (Cathomas, B. 1994: 368).

Attitudes of Romansh speakers towards the dominant language (German/Swiss-German) are generally positive. As German is seen as the language of progress and success, many Romansh-speaking parents are afraid their children may not learn enough German in school. In recent years, their worries have grown. As more German-speaking families settle in the Romansh-speaking territory, Romansh parents fear their children may be disadvantaged in

school as their knowledge of German may be compared with that of the German-monoglot children (Liesch 1998: 52). Regarding the continuous influx of German speakers into the Romansh territory, it would be understandable if Romansh speakers somewhat resented Swiss Germans. Many of them never learn to speak the language and are therefore threatening the stability of Romansh in its heartland. However, it is rarely the case that Romansh speakers complain of poor relations with the German-speaking majority. 73% of the Romansh-speaking 20-year-olds believe that relations between Romansh speakers and Swiss-German speakers are satisfactory, good or even very good (Pedretti 1994: 110).

Opinions of the Swiss about the Romansh are characterized by a high degree of ignorance. In the opinion poll of twenty-year-olds, Swiss Germans described the Romansh as nature-loving, traditional, friendly and shy. However, since many felt that they did not actually know the Romansh very well, they blamed them for their ignorance and described them as narrow-minded, stubborn and obdurate people that do not seek contact with the other language groups (Pedretti 1994: 96). Ignorance about the Romansh speakers is particularly widespread in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, where 72.1% of the 20-year-olds had no opinion of the Romansh (as compared to 44.9% in the Italian- and 33.9% in the German-speaking parts). Interestingly, positive attitudes towards the Romansh are more common among the Swiss Germans than among the French- and Italian-speaking Swiss population. While 57.5% of 20-year-old Swiss Germans regarded the Romansh as friendly, only 45.5% of the Italian- and 22.4% of the French speakers did so – proportions that question the existence of a feeling of solidarity among the minorities in Switzerland (Pedretti 1994: 98-100).

The Romansh language itself enjoys a certain prestige among the Swiss. It is liked for its melodic sound, and as the language of a beautiful region that is popular with tourists (Solèr 1997: 1882). However, those who live near to Romansh-speaking municipalities have rather negative attitudes towards the language and even doubt the usefulness of maintenance efforts. How else can it be explained that, in 1996 the new language article was accepted by 76% of the vote in Switzerland as a whole, but only by 65% in Graubünden? Several Swiss-German villages of Graubünden even rejected the revision of the language article, many of which are surrounded by Romansh-speaking territory. Paradoxically, their inhabitants seem to have adopted a defensive attitude towards Romansh. This is more surprising, considering that their Romansh neighbours are more than tolerant towards them and for instance always speak German at district assemblies (Furer 1999: 36-37).

## **5 DISCUSSION OF THE CURRENT SITUATIONS OF SORBIAN, GAELIC AND ROMANSH**

In Chapters 2-4, the situations of the three minority languages have been described according to those factors that influence the stability of a linguistic community. Subsequently, the findings of these chapters will be analysed on the basis of the language maintenance theories discussed in the first chapter. Attention will primarily be given to pinpointing the shortfalls in the situation of each language. Furthermore, a comparison of the three situations will facilitate the assessment of language maintenance measures.

### **5.1 GLOBALISATION AND MOBILITY**

As Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh are spoken in Western European countries, the regions in which they are spoken have not remained impervious to economic and scientific developments. The building of roads and railroads in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century has made most of the three minorities' traditional territories easily accessible. Contacts between the minorities and majorities subsequently increased, and many majority language speakers settled in the traditional minority heartlands. It is certainly no coincidence that the Outer Hebrides is the stronghold of the Gaelic language, as it is the remotest area of the Gaidhealtachd. The building of airports made even these remote islands relatively accessible. Furthermore, since the invention of radio and television, the dominant languages are present even in the most isolated regions and in homes where both parents speak the minority language.

Whereas the dominant languages and their speakers have risen to greater prominence in the minorities' traditional territories, the minority language speakers have often been forced to leave their regions for various reasons. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, economic pressures led to the emigration of a great number of Gaels (and to a lesser extent Sorbs and Romansh speakers) to North America. Since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the migration of minority members within Germany, Scotland and Switzerland to the economic centres of their respective countries has predominated. The reasons are the same for all three minorities: the difficult economic situations of their regions and the lack of higher education facilities. Now, members of the three minorities are scattered throughout their countries. However, the Gaels and Sorbs did not always leave their homeland voluntarily. The Clearances of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the destruction of Sorbian villages during the GDR era show that 'for the sake of progress' Europe's treatment of its minorities has not always been exemplary. While the Clearances have long since past, the destruction of Sorbian villages and the resettlement of their

inhabitants have continued until the present day, albeit at a somewhat slower pace. As recently as Autumn 2003, the demolition of the lower Sorbian village Horno went ahead despite manifold protests. It beggars belief how such a violation of a minority's rights is still possible in a country where, considering its history, political correctness and moral issues dominate modern political discourse.

While these resettlements could quite easily be outlawed, it would be rather more difficult to prevent the emigration of a great number of young Gaels, Sorbs and Romansh. After all, everyone has the right to leave his or her country of origin. To make the traditional regions more attractive for younger members of the communities, the number of further and higher education facilities must rise. Therefore, the plan to set up a University of the Highlands and Islands is certainly very important. Furthermore, jobs would be needed in those areas, especially in the bilingual Sorbian-German region, where the unemployment rate is among the highest in Germany. However, not all economic development helps to maintain threatened languages. The impact of coal mining in the Sorbian territory was undoubtedly harmful. Tourism also may have a negative effect if a region becomes too popular. The decline of Romansh in the Upper Engadine is certainly due to increased tourism, as it has had the knock-on effect of attracting German speakers to settle in the region. Naturally, a more differentiated economy would help.

## **5.2 DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS**

The current position of Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh speech communities is critical. With each having around 60,000 members, their size is far below the critical mass of 100,000 that Nettle and Romaine suggest as a rough estimate of safety. Only very small proportions of the populations of Saxony, Brandenburg, Scotland and Switzerland can speak the minority languages: 0.9% and 0.8% in Saxony and Brandenburg respectively, 1.21% in Scotland and 0.83% in Switzerland. The table below shows that all three language communities have shrunk over the last 120 years, if not in actual, but in relative terms. The figures from 1880 and the 1920s are those of mother tongue speakers, those of 1990 and later relate to people who are able to speak the minority language. Data from other census years could not be included on the grounds of different census questions.

Sorbian			Gaelic			Romansh		
1880/84	166,067		1881	231,594	6.76% <sup>2</sup>	1880	38,705	1.36% <sup>3</sup>
1925	70,998		1921	158,779	3.47%	1920	43,038	1.10%
1987	66,400	S: 0.9% <sup>4</sup> B: 0.8%	1991	65,978	1.37%	1990	66,356	0.97%
–	–		2001	58,652	1.21%	2000	60,816	0.83%

While the threat to Sorbian and Gaelic is plainly visible in the great loss of speakers over the last 120 years, in the case of Romansh the threat is not clear from looking at the number of speakers alone. It only becomes evident as soon as the language territory is taken into account. Romansh lost its majority position in no less than 49 villages during the last 120 years, to such an extent that the territory where it still holds a majority today no longer forms a connected whole. The Gaels' loss of their majority position is no less serious: while most inhabitants of the Gaidhealtachd spoke Gaelic in the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one hundred years later it found itself in the minority throughout most of the area. Only at the northwestern fringes of Scotland, in the Western Isles, northern Skye and Tiree can more than 50% of the population speak Gaelic. Regarding the traditional language territory, the Sorbs may even be in the worst position. Their language territory consists of several 'islands' dispersed over a rather large area. Even there, the Sorbs only make up around 10% of the population. The area in which they are the majority is a mere five Catholic Upper Sorbian municipalities.

The shrinking of their traditional territories is inextricably linked to the dispersion of their speakers. Never before have the Gaelic, Romansh and Sorbian communities been so scattered throughout their countries of origin as today. Only around a third of Romansh speakers and 27% of Gaelic speakers live in an area where the language is in a majority position. For Sorbian the percentage is around 25%. An increasing number even live outside the traditional minority language areas: 44.5% of Gaelic speakers, around a third of the Romansh and undoubtedly also a rather high percentage of Sorbian speakers, as many have been leaving Lusatia to search for work in Western Germany. This continuing dispersion of the three minorities is a major problem for language maintenance. It certainly no longer suffices to protect the minority languages in their traditional territories alone. Even if Gaelic,

<sup>2</sup> Proportion of the Scottish population being able to speak Gaelic.

<sup>3</sup> Proportion of the Swiss population being able to speak Romansh.

<sup>4</sup> S: proportion of Saxony's population being able to speak Sorbian. B: proportion of Brandenburg's population being able to speak Sorbian. Proportions of earlier years are not available.

Romansh and Sorbian were given the same status as the majority languages at the national level, it would not be enough to reverse the language shift among those living outside the traditional language territories. For them it will be very unlikely to reach what Fishman calls the crucial stage in any reversing language shift effort: the well-functioning home-family neighbourhood community. Thus, their daily use of the language will be low and the probability of them transmitting the language even lower.

A further cause for concern is the age profile of Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh speakers. This is especially worrying for Lower Sorbian. It has become a language spoken primarily by the elderly with no mother tongue speakers under the age of forty. No age-related language data is available for Sorbian. However, regarding the rather small number of pupils enrolled in Sorbian A- and B-schools (1,400 and 3,580 pupils respectively), it looks doubtful that there will be enough children speaking the language to maintain the Sorbian community at its current size. Gaelic too suffers from a lack of child and young adult mother tongue speakers. The percentage of the 65-74 age group, at 1.61%, is almost double that of the younger age group of 3-15 year olds (0.92%) and 16-24 years old (0.95%). Romansh also has a disproportionate number of adult speakers, as the language is rarely transmitted to children by those 50% of Romansh speakers living outside the traditional Romansh territory. Regarding the age profile of the three linguistic minorities, a further decrease in the communities' size must be expected. Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh speakers must be convinced of the utility of their language and of bilingualism to ensure that the age profile of all three languages changes for the better.

A further cause for concern is that the use and maintenance of the minority languages today largely depends on the speakers' attitudes towards them. Even in their heartlands, where up to 80% of the population speak the minority language, the latter is in an increasingly weak position. The reason is that 100% of the inhabitants are proficient in the majority language. Data on language abilities are also alarming. Only a small majority of the 57.7% of Romansh speakers indicate Romansh as their best known language, and even a majority of the Sorbs and Gaels perceive they have better abilities in understanding, speaking, reading and writing the dominant language.

### **5.3 THE SPEECH COMMUNITIES AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO THE LANGUAGE**

The situation of the three languages as regards their speech communities is far from ideal. Instead of being localised, the three speech communities are dispersed across their respective countries. With only around a quarter of each minority living in an area where a majority speaks the language, it has to be assumed that more than half of all Sorbs, Gaels and Romansh speakers do not live in a well-functioning, home-family-neighbourhood community. This means that the crucial stage of Fishman's reversing language shift theory, "the intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood-community" (Fishman 1991: 395), has not been reached.

The realisation of active home-family-neighbourhood communities outside the traditional language territories may be almost impossible. Fishman's suggestions of establishing cultural organisations, RLS recreational centres, nurseries, or playgroups may not be very popular in practice. Contrary to many newly-arrived immigrant minorities, the Sorbs, Gaels and Romansh speakers have a very good knowledge of the dominant language, to the extent that they do not need to establish a close network of Sorbian, Gaelic or Romansh speakers when living in the diaspora. As there are no language barriers that separate them from the majority group, they may not feel isolated and are not dependent on assistance from their fellow community members. They may even want to avoid contact with other minority language speakers in order to enjoy the anonymity of the majority group. The heartlands of the three languages are today so small that minority members leaving their native area to work or study in another location may shun membership of Sorbian, Romansh or Gaelic organisations in order to escape the small world of their speech community and mingle with other people. This is not to say that one should not try to establish cultural organisations as well as Sorbian-, Gaelic- and Romansh- medium education units outside the traditional language territories. Such initiatives are important instruments to raise the profile of minority languages, even if not all minority language speakers wish to take part. The growing interest in Gaelic- and Romansh-medium education among non-native speakers (the majority of pupils in Gaelic-medium units of the Lowlands and in the Romansh-medium kindergarten in Chur come from homes where the minority language is not spoken) hopefully will help to change the prestige of the language in the eyes of their mother-tongue speakers.

The growing diaspora is not the only problem ailing these speech communities. Even in the heartlands of Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh, the languages do not enjoy the same profile

in their traditional communities as in the past. According to the Euromosaic survey, the use of Gaelic in the community has decreased by half over one generation. The Sorbian respondents report an almost as dramatic reduction in the use of Sorbian. Of course, it may be possible that the respondents recollect the past too positively. However, the difference between their estimation of the current situation and the past is too great for this to be used as an explanation. Reasons for the declining use of the minority languages even in their heartlands are manifold. First, many Sorbs, Gaels and Romansh may simply find it easier to speak the majority language as a large number already indicate a better knowledge of the majority language. Second, many minority speakers are simply too polite to insist on speaking their language to newcomers, especially as many majority language speakers still find it rude if Sorbian, Gaelic or Romansh is spoken in their presence. Many of the English- and German-speaking newcomers do not make the effort to learn the minority language, even if they settle in the heartland of the minority.

As regards language use during activities within the communities, majority languages particularly dominate in sports activities. However, there also seems to be a growing tendency not to use Sorbian, Gaelic (and to a lesser extent of Romansh) in cultural activities. Especially in the Sorbian-German bilingual area, many traditions seem to be losing their ethnic dimension and have become increasingly regarded as regional folklore. Similarly, Celtic music has long since become popular with the majority and is today played around the globe. While the interest of the majority in the minority culture is not negative for language maintenance, it nevertheless means that the link between language and culture has weakened and that language maintenance may no longer be as directly influenced by the support of the minority culture as before.

Unfortunately, the difficult situation faced by Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh languages is not limited to its use as a means of communication within the community, but now within the families. For each language, the percentage of families in which only one parent is a minority language speaker is currently around 50%. Therefore, the proportion of families that only use the minority language as a means of communication is very small. According to the Euromosaic surveys, it is around 33% for Sorbian and 18% for Gaelic. Outside the predominantly Romansh-speaking villages, the percentage for Romansh is similarly low. In order to improve the standing of Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh within families, all primary schools in the Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh majority area would have to use the minority

language as the medium of instruction. Data on Romansh shows that Romansh-medium schools help to maintain the language in families and are even partly able to assimilate the children of newcomers.

#### **5.4 THE OFFICIAL STATUS OF THE MINORITY LANGUAGES AND CULTURES**

Although it seems reasonable that minority members of a society need extra legal protection in order to survive, Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh do not enjoy the same rights as the majority languages in their countries. While Romansh at least has official status at the regional level, Sorbian and Gaelic, even in their traditional heartlands, do not enjoy the same legal protection as the dominant languages. Even the official status of Romansh at the cantonal level did not help to maintain the Romansh language in its traditional territory. Graubünden is the only multilingual canton of Switzerland where language borders have changed significantly over the last hundred years. In reality, the canton of Graubünden has never really been concerned with bestowing official status on Romansh by using the language as much as German and Italian. There are many examples of this lax attitude, ranging from not requiring a working knowledge of Romansh for posts in the traditional Romansh territory to not corresponding with Romansh-speaking village authorities in Romansh. While there is generally not enough will to implement the legal requirements that would support Romansh, there is also the principle of subsidiarity that proves to be a hindrance to improved protection of the language. Consequently, the municipalities are free to choose their official language and may change it from Romansh to German, as soon as German-speaking newcomers have a simple majority. Although this has often been the case in the past, there seems no way of preventing it in the future, except if the Romansh-speaking municipalities themselves take a more pro-active stance. The introduction of an official language rule according to the example set by the Lower Engadine and Val Müstair seems to be the only feasible solution for improved protection of Romansh in its traditional territory.

As the subsidiarity principle applies also at the national level, the federal government is also rather restricted in the support it can offer the Romansh language and culture. The Confederation may not pursue a policy of its own, but is dependent on projects initiated by the Canton of Graubünden. Only if the latter proposes a language maintenance measure and is willing to co-fund it, can the Confederation become actively involved. Here too the subsidiarity principle works to the disadvantage of Romansh: Graubünden was less than willing to improve the situation of Romansh as seen in the 1996 vote on the new language

article in the revised Swiss Constitution. The Confederation has also not been very eager to raise the official status of Romansh. While the political motion that led to the revision of the language article demanded a fully official status for Romansh, the Confederation opposed it for financial reasons. However, it remains to be proven if four official languages would have proven significantly more expensive than three.

While much could be done to improve the situation of Romansh if the existing legal provisions were enforced, the Gaelic and Sorbian languages clearly need better legal protection. Currently, Gaels and Sorbs do not have the right to use their language when communicating with the national government. Even with the local administration of their traditional territories they scarcely have the opportunity to communicate in Sorbian or Gaelic (with the exception of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar), as there is no bilingual policy. Therefore, it is of primary importance that Sorbian and Gaelic become official languages in their traditional territories, or at least in the districts where a substantial proportion of the population are Sorbian or Gaelic speakers. Unsurprisingly, the two languages would also need better protection with regards to jurisdiction. However, people have a great deal more contact with the local administration than with the courts. An amendment to the status of Sorbian, Gaelic (and Romansh) in the courts therefore is not so urgent. Even if the three languages had official status in their traditional territories, it would still not be enough for language maintenance, as long as the majority languages also enjoy official status. Although the minority and majority languages, in theory, would be equal, in reality their situations would still be very different. While the majority language could profit from an influx of newcomers from other regions, Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh could not. Contrary to German and English they do not have a large area where they are the sole official language and where their majority is undisputed. Therefore, it would be essential to make Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh the sole official languages in those regions where they are still in the majority. Naturally, this demand cannot be easily met. District boundaries would have to change, even though the minorities may actually oppose this project for fear of isolation. However, as long as Romansh, Sorbian and Gaelic do not have an area where they are established as the sole official languages, it will not come as any surprise that German and English will continue to spread at their expense.

In relation to the large numbers of Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh speakers living outside the traditional language territories, it is also essential that all three languages enjoy a certain

protection at the national level (in the case of Sorbian at the level of the 'Länder' of Brandenburg and Saxony). Not only should the minority language speakers receive the right to communicate in their language with the government (a demand that is already met in the case of Romansh) but they should also be able to receive Sorbian-, Gaelic- or Romansh-medium education for their children, where there is sufficient demand. If these provisions are made and the three languages become official languages of their traditional territories, this may very well prove more effective for language maintenance than the current system of granting financial aid to various language maintenance projects. Then, the funding of "language maintenance projects", such as tuition in the minority language, could no longer be regarded as a generous support of the minority but rather as an ordinary task of the government. However, as long as the three languages are not given better legal protection, the funding they receive from the majority may continue to be considered as compensation for not granting them improved status. In fact, it is uncertain whether current funding would have been needed, had the three minority languages been given the same legal status as the majority languages.

## **5.5 EDUCATION**

There is certainly room for improvement in relation to the position of Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh in the education system. Ideally, teaching in schools in the traditional minority language territories should be able to provide children with a sound knowledge of the minority language not only in terms of comprehension and oral proficiency, but also in terms of reading and writing. In addition, education should also ensure that these children are proficient in the majority language so that they are not disadvantaged when leaving the minority area. Schools should also be able to assimilate the children of newcomers in order to protect the position of the minority language in the community.

The only school that may be said to achieve these goals is the Romansh-medium primary school. In the lower classes, when German is not yet taught, its positive influence on language maintenance is most obvious: the language of communication among children is clearly Romansh; German is only used by 25% of the children. Furthermore, the proportion of children reporting Romansh as their best known language is highest among 10-year olds, i.e. those who have completed the three years of 100% Romansh-medium education. Romansh-medium schools also help to assimilate children from Swiss-German families. Newcomers are almost obliged to send their children to the local schools, as there are no German-medium

primary schools in villages with a Romansh-medium school. Therefore, the children of newcomers who are under 12 will become linguistically assimilated. 19% of the children from Swiss-German families even indicate the regular use of Romansh in their families. However, with regards to reaching adequate proficiency in reading and writing in the minority language, the Romansh A-schools could certainly be improved. Only one out of every five Romansh-speaking twenty-year-olds prefers reading in Romansh to reading in German. This is a sign that not enough is being done to develop a high level of literacy in Romansh. Of course, another reason may be the limited availability of Romansh print media. It would therefore be greatly beneficial to afford Romansh a better status in secondary schools in the Romansh heartland and teach at least 50% of the lessons in the language. Furthermore, the situation in high schools still falls short, as two schools that are highly frequented by Romansh speakers do not offer the bilingual programme. Evidently, the situation is worse for those Romansh-speaking children who must attend a Romansh B-school or a German-medium school. As these schools offer some sort of German submersion education for Romansh mother-tongue speakers, it is only logical that many Romansh parents prefer to speak both Romansh and German at home so that their children may keep up with their German-speaking peers.

In comparison to Romansh, Gaelic has the great disadvantage that English-medium education is even available in the Gaelic-speaking majority area. Therefore, the percentage of pupils in Gaelic-medium primary schools does not exceed 25%, even in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. This is more surprising since achieving native-like proficiency in English is also ensured in Gaelic-medium education. English is already introduced as a subject and sometimes even as a medium of instruction in the third year, so that only the first two years in primary school can truly be called 'Gaelic-medium education'. Currently, the enrolment in Gaelic-medium primary education (1859 pupils for Scotland as a whole and 542 for the Western Isles) is far too low to guarantee a secure future for the language. Hopefully, the improvement of its status thanks to the introduction of a Gaelic Language Bill will help to improve attitudes towards Gaelic-medium education. For a better promotion of Gaelic-medium education, it would be necessary to conduct an opinion poll among parents in the Western Isles to discover the motives of those that do not send their children to Gaelic-medium classes.

Since Gaelic-medium education is optional, schools in the Gaidhealtachd cannot be credited with assimilating children of non-Gaelic-speaking newcomers. The two years of compulsory Gaelic classes in the Western Isles' secondary schools cannot lead to fluency in

the language. They may be useful to prove political correctness but not to maintain the language. For the purpose of assimilating the children of newcomers, it would be necessary to teach the language in nursery or primary school. However, it is not only Comhairle nan Eilean Siar that needs to give Gaelic a better position in education. In the rest of the Gaidhealtachd, it is even possible to go through school without ever having had a Gaelic lesson. Nevertheless, the presence of Gaelic in education has significantly improved since the setting up of the first Gaelic-medium units throughout the Gaidhealtachd and in each major Scottish city in 1985. Consequently, an important step has been made towards the maintenance of Gaelic. Nevertheless, as long as Gaelic, and in particular Gaelic-medium education, has not been given a secure legal status, it is not surprising that many Gaelic-speaking parents are reluctant to register their children for Gaelic-medium education.

Sorbian too needs to be afforded a better status in education. A-schools, in particular, urgently need greater protection. For instance, there should be legal provisions in place to stop German-medium schools opening in the Sorbian majority area (where most of the A-schools are). Furthermore, the minimum number of pupils that are needed to run a Sorbian A-school should be lower than that for German-medium schools. As the number of A-school pupils currently only amounts to around 1,400, it is also important to seek other educational measures that may help to maintain Sorbian. Bilingual education throughout primary as well as secondary school is an alternative. The current projects need to be promoted across the bilingual territory with the aim of turning more B-schools into bilingual schools. Furthermore, Sorbian should become a compulsory subject throughout the bilingual area, in order to guarantee a minimum level of assimilation. Currently, Sorbian classes are not even compulsory for children of Sorbian-speaking parents.

Obviously, a number of problems could be solved if the three languages had a secure legal status in their respective education systems. First, minority-medium schools should no longer be closed for financial reasons alone (as has happened in the Sorbian territory). Second, municipalities should no longer have the power to decide unilaterally to abandon the teaching of the minority language or even change the language of instruction (as has so often happened in Graubünden). Third, a secure legal status may also help to reduce the current teacher shortage, as it would encourage more young people to take up a teaching career.

## 5.6 MEDIA

Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh media are strongly dependent on financial aid from their respective countries, as the three minorities would not have the economic clout to fund media in their language. As television programmes are very costly to produce, it is in television, where two of the three languages, Sorbian and Romansh, are particularly lacking. Since television is the most frequently used medium today, it is especially useful for enhancing the profile of a minority language as well as for intensifying the sense of identity of its speakers. Research on Gaelic television programmes shows that "television has created an added vitality for the language", or as one Gael said: "Mura biodh i beò, cha bhiodh i air telebhisean. [If Gaelic were not a living language, it would not be on television.]" (MacNeil 1995/96: 101). Moreover, Gaelic television programmes with English subtitles have proven to be very popular with Gaelic learners and have generally very high audiences. In view of these advantages, efforts should be made to increase the use of Sorbian and Romansh on television to several hours per week as well as to find more possibilities of broadcasting repeats. This would increase the (passive) use of the given language as well as their prestige in the eyes of the minorities and the majorities.

Both television and radio have the added advantage of reaching those that are unable to read or even speak the minority language. Since self-assessments by the Sorbs, Gaels and Romansh speakers in relation to their reading abilities were rather low, it would be useful to favour an increase in radio and television programme provision. The provision of Sorbian television and radio broadcasts is clearly the weakest of the three. The three hours of Upper Sorbian radio in the early morning should at least be extended with some programmes in the afternoon or evening. Furthermore, it would be important to set up *one* Sorbian radio station that would broadcast in both idioms. As the experience with Radio Rumantsch has shown, a radio station broadcasting in various dialects may foster mutual understanding and a sense of solidarity. As for Gaelic and Romansh, the current provision of radio programmes per day (nine and fourteen hours respectively) may be called satisfying. Nevertheless, extending airtime would certainly be useful, as Gaels and Romansh speakers can only hear their language spoken on the radio at certain times of the day.

As regards print journalism, Gaelic is clearly in the worst situation. While Sorbs and Romansh speakers both have a daily newspaper in their language, the Gaels only have a monthly news publication. The establishment of a Gaelic weekly newspaper seems long

overdue, especially in view of the developments in Gaelic broadcasting over recent years. However, without state funding, this aim is virtually impossible. The Sorbian and the Romansh press too are directly or indirectly subsidised. As regards those two languages, everything should be done to preserve the status quo. The best future scenario for Sorbian and Romansh press would of course be if the two daily newspapers *Serbske Nowiny* and *La Quotidiana* had enough money to publish more national news, so that Sorbian and Romansh speakers would no longer be obliged to read a German-language newspaper to be thoroughly informed.

### **5.7 LANGUAGE ATTITUDES**

David Bradley (2002: 1) believes that it is crucial for language maintenance that minority language speakers regard their language as a key aspect of their identity. Sorbian and Romansh speakers fulfil this criterion: 74% of Sorbs consider their language the most important characteristic of their identity and 78.2% of twenty-year-old Romansh speakers find it important or even very important to be a Romansh speaker. The Gaels, however, identify themselves more strongly with their native region than with their language and may therefore be more likely to give up their language.

Nevertheless, the attitudes of Sorbs and Romansh speakers to their respective language is not as favourable for language maintenance as they could be. The greatest cause for concern is that each of the three language groups strongly doubts the utility of its language. Almost half of all Gaelic speakers believe that there are more valuable languages to learn. Similarly, many young people in the Lower Lusatian village of Hochoza are convinced that no advantage is to be gained from oral proficiency in Sorbian. Due to the same scepticism, many Romansh speakers living outside the traditional territory do not transmit their language. Even 35% of the families in which both parents are Romansh speakers do not pass the language on, a proportion that would be completely unthinkable for any of the other three official languages of Switzerland. Regarding the limited scope of usage of the three languages, the scepticism of its speakers is understandable. In order to improve attitudes towards Romansh, Sorbian and Gaelic, it is therefore necessary to increase the use of the languages, for instance, by strengthening their position in the regional administration.

A further cause for concern is the attitudes of the Sorbian and Romansh speakers to the subvarieties of their language. Their traditional loyalty to the subvarieties complicates

communication in the language community as a whole. The perception of Lower Sorbs that they do not speak 'proper' Sorbian, as well as the Upper Sorbs ignorance of the linguistic difference with Lower Sorbian may even have accelerated the decline of the language in Lower Lusatia. Similarly, attitudes towards the various idioms and the acceptance of the standard variety, Rumantsch Grischun, may be decisive for the future of Romansh. As long as Romansh speakers remain reluctant to use the standard variety in written communication and to introduce its teaching in schools, it will be difficult to convince German-speaking organisations and individuals to use Rumantsch Grischun instead of German when communicating with the Romansh community.

Furthermore, it is crucial that attitudes of the majorities towards the minorities improve. Although the majorities are generally tolerant towards the use of the minority language, there are still far too few majority language speakers willing to learn the minority language when settling in the heartland of the minority. Many are not even willing to try to acquire a passive knowledge of the language and object to being addressed in the minority language. The continual erosion of the Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh heartlands proves that there are too many newcomers. Therefore, the three linguistic minorities should become less tolerant towards those newcomers that are unwilling to learn the language and should continue to speak their language even in the presence of non-minority language speakers. This may, however, be difficult to put into practice as no one wants to be accused of rudeness.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to analyse how ideal the current situations of Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh are for language maintenance. During the above discussion, several shortcomings came to light. The following table summarises the advantages and shortcomings of each situation according to the seven factors identified above. The more criteria that are answered in the affirmative, the better the chances for language maintenance.

	Sorbian	Gaelic	Romansh
<b>Globalisation and Mobility</b> - there is as good as no emigration of the minority out of the traditional minority territory - there is as good as no immigration of the majority into the traditional minority territory	no no	no no	no no
<b>Demographic Factors</b> - the language has 100,000 or more speakers - the majority of the community lives in an area where a majority speaks the language - the age profile of speakers is consistent - the territory where a significant number speaks the minority language forms a connected whole	no no no no	no no no yes	no no no no
<b>Speech Community</b> - the community shows only a limited amount of exogamy - a majority lives in a well functioning home-family-neighbourhood community - the use of the language within municipalities has remained stable during the last 30-40 years - initiatives to save the language are generated in the minority communities	no no no yes	no no no yes	no no no yes
<b>Official Status</b> - the language is an official language in its traditional territory - the administration of the traditional territory is truly bilingual - the minority has a right to communicate in their language with the national government	no no no	no no no	yes no yes
<b>Education</b> - enough children are taught in the minority language to guarantee language viability - most primary school pupils in the territory where a majority speaks the language are taught in the minority language - education in the minority language has secure status on the national level - schools may assimilate the children of newcomers in municipalities where a majority speaks the minority language	no yes no partly	no no no no	no yes no partly
<b>Media</b> - information on local issues is available in the minority language - information about national issues is available in the minority language	yes no	yes partly	yes only radio
<b>Language Attitudes</b> - the minority is convinced of the utility and importance of its language - the language is a key aspect of the minority's identity - the majority is convinced of the beauty of the minority language - the monolingual majority tolerates the use of the minority language in their presence - majority language speakers moving to the heartland of the minority are willing to learn the language	no yes - no rarely	partly partly yes ? rarely	no yes yes no rarely

Evidently, none of the three languages has adequate conditions for language maintenance. Each language only meets a few criteria that would guarantee its secure future. Only the media criteria are more or less met. The situations of the three languages with regard to the other factors are far from ideal. Especially worrying is the fact that most Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh speakers live outside the area where the majority speaks their language. Therefore, a majority of the three linguistic communities no longer lives in what Fishman calls an 'intergenerational and demographically concentrated home-family-neighbourhood community' that communicates in the minority language. As we have seen, minority language speakers living outside such a community have very low language transmission rates. Therefore, the age profile of each minority shows a significantly higher number of elderly speakers.

Today, those Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh speakers that live in an area where a majority speaks their language are too few to guarantee the continued existence of the communities at their current size. Moreover, even for those, conditions for language maintenance are not ideal. Sorbian, for instance, lacks official status even in the regions where most Sorbs live. The administration in the Sorbian-German bilingual territory therefore functions entirely in German. The greatest disadvantage for Gaelic lies with education, as even in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar only a minority of the children are enrolled in Gaelic-medium units. Schools, even in the Gaelic-speaking heartland, cannot therefore be credited with assimilating non-Gaelic speaking children. Furthermore, all three minorities are confronted with newcomers who settle in the traditional territory and are rarely willing to learn the minority language. In fact, there is also no need for them to do so, as all minority language speakers are today perfectly bilingual. As a result of the immigration of majority speakers, the territories where a substantial proportion of the population speaks Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh have continually declined. Today, the territories of Sorbian and Romansh consist of several 'islands' that are surrounded by German-speaking areas.

In view of these disadvantages, prospects for language maintenance can hardly be called positive. Further losses of speakers in the next few years have to be expected for all three languages. In order to maintain the three languages, a number of measures would have to be taken immediately. For instance, it would be of primary importance to define the territory where a majority speaks Sorbian, Gaelic or Romansh. There, the minority language would need to become the sole official language, i.e. correspondence with the population and the

villages authorities would have to be in the minority language. Primary schools in the region would need to be minority-language-medium schools in order to give the children a sound basic knowledge of the language as well as to help assimilate the children of newcomers. Without this protection, German and English will certainly continue to spread into these areas. Furthermore, Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh should become official languages in areas where a substantial proportion of the population speaks the language. In order to maintain the bilingual character of those areas, bilingual education would need to be widely available and the local administration would have to become truly bilingual.

While these measures may give the languages a certain status and importance in those areas where a substantial proportion speaks Sorbian, Gaelic or Romansh, it is of course the speech communities themselves that need to show determination in maintaining their language. Yet, the desire of the language groups to sustain themselves is not apparent. Especially alarming is the case of Gaelic, which has low language transmission rates even in the Gaelic-speaking heartland. In the Western Isles, Skye and Lochalsh only one family in three with one Gaelic-speaking parent transmits the language. Furthermore, many Gaels do not seize any available opportunity to speak Gaelic in the community, such as in shops, at the hairdresser, or in restaurants. Romansh too is not transmitted by a substantial proportion of families with one Romansh-speaking parent. Even in the territory where the majority speaks Romansh, one fifth of those families do not transmit the language.

On the other hand, many initiatives have recently been generated within the communities that show the language groups' will to maintain their language. The improved status of Romansh to a partly official language was due to a parliamentary motion of a Romansh speaker. The support for the 'manifesto on the situation of Romansh' proved that a considerable number of the Romansh population is willing to fight for the maintenance of their language. Gaelic speakers initiated the setting up of Gaelic-medium education, the introduction of bilingual road signs as well as the recent discussion on a Gaelic Language Bill. The Sorbs have shown their determination to maintain their language by staging a series of demonstrations against the closure of their schools and the destruction of the village of Horno. These initiatives are currently generated by a determined minority of the community. To reverse language shift the aims of these language activists must enjoy greater support. The future of Sorbian, Gaelic and Romansh will depend on how well these activists can motivate and mobilise the indifferent members of their respective communities.

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Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

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Officially, a minority language is one that's spoken by a minority of people within a given country or territory. Three weeks later I was flying out of Logan Airport on Ethiopian Airlines headed for the land of a thousand hills (an underestimate by my count). On the plane, I wrote out my main objectives for the year. The two big ones were: pour my heart into the fellowship and learn to speak Kinyarwanda fluently. Regional and minority languages The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages opted to use both terms together (RMLs). RMLs are languages that. The choice of the terms 'regional' and 'minority' languages are different from the official. was one of many options considered. States parties have to choose at least three measures in cultural activities and education, and at least one action in the remaining domains of public life. Signatories are under the obligation to prepare a ratification instrument specifying the RMLs as well as the chosen measures to promote them. They are bound to send regular implementation reports to be examined by a committee of experts. The European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) is a European treaty (CETS 148) adopted in 1992 under the auspices of the Council of Europe to protect and promote historical regional and minority languages in Europe. The preparation for the charter was undertaken by the predecessor to the current Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe because involvement of local and regional government was essential. The actual